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ANGEL'S WINGS



TO MY FRIEND

G. E. H.

ANGELS' WINGS

A SERIES OF

Essays on Art and its Relation to Life

BY

EDWARD CARPENTER

WITH EIGHT FULL-PAGE PLATES

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Through the long Night-time where the Nations wander
From Eden past to Paradise to be,
Art's sacred flowers, like fair stars shining yonder,
Alone illumine Life's obscurity.

O gracious Artists, out of your deep hearts
'T is some great Sun, I doubt, by men unguessed,
Whose rays come struggling thus, in slender darts,
To shadow what Is, till Time shall manifest.

ANGELS' WINGS

I.

Art and Democracy
(Wagner, Millet, and Whitman)

THERE is a strong impression that the Democratic idea as it grows and spreads will have a profound influence on Art and artistic methods; and that Art, in its relation to life generally, is in these days passing into new phases of development. The following papers have been largely occasioned by some such feeling. In the present chapter I propose to take three of the greatest artists in different departments who have touched upon the theme—Wagner, Millet, and Whitman—and compare their works and writings in reference to it.

These three names have lately been classed together more than once; and naturally enough, for there is much that is in common between them. Richard

Wagner was born in 1813, J. F. Millet in 1814, and Walt Whitman in 1819. In 1845 took place the first performance of *Tannhaüser*, at Dresden; in 1850 the "Sower" was exhibited at the Paris Salon; and in 1855 a portion of *Leaves of Grass* appeared at New York—each of these productions being the first instalment of a whole series of works which were destined to make a profound and revolutionary impression on their respective branches of Art, and on the conception of Art generally as a whole. All three men were revolutionaries, in more than one sense of the word. Wagner was arrested in the streets of Dresden for complicity in the riots of '48; Millet was nicknamed the "Wild Man of the Woods" by his fellow-students, and accused of being a "Socialist" by his critics; Whitman was ejected from his clerkship in the Treasury at Washington on account of the wickedness of his poems. All three used new methods in their art-work, which we shall have to examine presently. And (what is of most importance to us here) all three thought, and wrote at some length, on the subject of Art generally, its meaning and methods.

We cannot do better than study what they have said.

Millet—in a letter to Pelloquet, evoked by some criticisms of his work—says:—

"Things (in a picture) must not have the appearance of being brought together by chance or for a purpose, but must have a necessary and inevitable connexion. I desire that the creations which I depict should have the air of being dedicated to their situation, so that one could not imagine that they would dream of being anything else than what they are. A work of art ought to be all one piece, and the men and things in it should always be there for a reason. . . . It were better that things weakly said should not be said at all, because in the former case they are only as it were deflowered and spoiled. . . . Beauty does not consist so much in the things represented, as in the *need* one has had of expressing them; and this need it is which creates the degree of force with which one acquits oneself of the work. One may say that every thing is beautiful provided the thing turns up in its own proper time and in its own place; and contrariwise that nothing can be beautiful arriving inappropriately. . . . Let Apollo *be* Apollo, and Socrates Socrates. Which is the more beautiful, a straight tree or a crooked tree? Whichever is the most in place. This then is my conclusion: The beautiful is that which is in place."

Says Walt Whitman, in a well-known passage of his preface in the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*:—

"The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters, is simplicity. Nothing is better than

simplicity—nothing can make up for excess, or for lack of definiteness. To carry on the heave of impulse and pierce intellectual depths and give all subjects their articulations, are powers neither common nor very uncommon. But to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals, and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside, is the flawless triumph of art. If you have look'd on him who has achiev'd it you have look'd on one of the masters of the artists of all nations and times. . . . The great poet has less a mark'd style, and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. He swears to his art, I will not be meddlesome, I will not have in my writing any elegance, or effect, or originality, to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is. . . . What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me."

There are some curious points of resemblance in these two passages from Millet and Whitman, which we may note just here. There is that idea of the necessity, the inevitableness, the absolute directness of all good art-work, as they conceived it, which is at the farthest pole from the elaborate study of artificial effects and the grandiose style.

Whitman does not want the richest curtains to hang between him and others. Millet cannot sufficiently express his abhorrence of *inutilités* and *remplissages*. Then there is that hint of the acceptance of *everything*—everything provided it is "in place"—which is the key to the appearance of so-called Realism in modern Art. And lastly there is that curious wavering of the line between Art and Nature itself—"to speak with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals," to tell a thing "for precisely what it is," to paint things so that they do not "dream of being anything else than what they are"—which one distinguishes in both passages; and which, hard as it is to define, is so marked in the works of the two men, as well as in their theories.

In Wagner's writings—in *Art and Revolution*, in *The Art-work of the Future*, in *Art and Climate*, and *A Communication to my Friends*—these points are also strongly accented. Everywhere he insists on need, Necessity, as the great inspiration; "Need being at the root of things, at the other pole we find fashion and custom—and the machine-made"; without need, "Art degenerates to Mannerism." Everywhere he is down on the rich and cultured

and intellectual classes who, living divorced from actual needs and life, trifle with Art to make it a toy and a plaything. "Ye lack Belief, belief in the Necessity of what ye do!" "Not ye Wise Men, therefore, are the true inventors, but the Folk," and the Folk is "the epitome of all those who feel a common and collective need." The hint of acceptance and Realism comes in his tendency to glorify the naked body and the natural life of the People; and in his intense dislike of abstractions—as when he calls Oratorios "the sexless embryos of Operas." And his views on the close historical relationship between Art and Nature or Actual Life are so marked, and form such a distinct part of his teaching, as to be worth considering separately for a moment.

His theory on this point seems to have been (putting it briefly and in my own words) something like this. There was a time in the history of mankind—best illustrated by an early period of Greek life—when the natural life of the people was in a kind of unconscious way artistic and beautiful. The human body was not ashamed to be seen; Nature and Man lived friendly together, with a sense of sacredness and divinity between—the one

not polluting the other; the old tribal feeling of social amity and brotherhood still lingered; the greed and egoism and restless misery of later and more civilized times were not yet developed. At this period life itself, the festivals, the games, the religious ceremonies, the social institutions, were touched with beauty. The æsthetic sense, slowly evolving, first caused men instinctively to *make* life lovely, and then—then—just at the moment when the new forces were bringing a fatal change—caused them to *perceive* its beauty. It was at this moment that Art arose, arose as a thing separate and distinct from Nature and the actual life. Life was ceasing to be beautiful, artistic, but already men were striving to preserve the vanishing charm and perfection in deliberate creations of their own hands and brains. The first of these creations, quite naturally, was the Drama, which portrayed human society itself, and which evolved spontaneously from the old religious ceremonials. But grouped round the Drama, and more or less amalgamated with it, as of course they had been before with actual life, were Architecture, Sculpture, Music, Song, Dance, etc., each now erecting and defining itself more and more into a separate and self-conscious Art.

This first period, of the dawning self-consciousness of Art, of native instinct wedded to intelligence, was the most perfect. Later, as life became more and more sordid and ugly, there was more of convulsive clinging to æsthetic effort, but less of real mastery. With the decay of the instinct of communal life and religion the Drama decayed. The separate arts, each evolving along its own line, tried each to preserve its separate fragments of beauty. Song occupied itself with recital of heroic deeds and lovely days gone by; Sculpture strove to allay the natural hunger for the sight of the human form, now fast disappearing under clothes, but strove under conditions ever more and more adverse; Architecture, the gods being dead, began to get shaky and uncertain as to what it had to do; Dance lost its religious sanction and skipped away into mere lasciviousness; Painting still tried to keep up the memory of the lost folk-life; and so forth. And as the Greek outburst of Art took place on this wise, so the later great outburst of the Renaissance occurred with the decay of the communal and mediæval society of Central and Northern Europe.

Thus it will be seen that if we figure that state of

society in which *life itself* is beautiful and gracious, under the image of the sun, then Wagner considered Art to be as it were the reflected glories which are thrown on the clouds of sunset—most beautiful soon after the disappearance of the luminary, and gradually fading away, with its memory, into a night-time of mere tradition and convention.[1]

But if there is sunset, there is also sunrise; and Wagner foresaw, or thought he foresaw, that not long before the reappearance of the figurative sun, the splendors of true Art would again revive. "The Greek," he says, "proceeding from the bosom of Nature, attained to Art when he had made himself independent of the immediate influence of Nature. *We*, violently debarred from Nature, and proceeding from the dull ground of a heaven-rid and juristic civilization, shall first reach Art when we completely turn our backs on such a civilization, and once more cast ourselves, with conscious bent, into the arms of Nature."[2] It is needless to say that he considered his own attempt to rehabilitate the unity

[1] In modern times landscape painting has had the real mission of consoling the dwellers in the dirt of large towns with a kind of distant image of that great nature which they only see occasionally from the windows of the railway cars.

[2] *Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. by W. A. Ellis.

of the arts in his dramas as one of the signs of the coming dawn.[1]

Without of course saying that Millet or Whitman would have subscribed their names in full to this remarkable theory of Wagner's, it is I think evident that their thoughts lie in the same direction, and quite possible that the theory throws much light upon their works.

I propose now, however, to pass briefly in review the art-work and methods of the three men separately, with the object of disentangling more definitely some of their conceptions. And, as the literary art involves less technicality than the other two, I will begin with Whitman.

Whitman, as he constantly tells us, accepted most heartily the foregoing literature and literary forms. Then why did he not *use* the old literary forms? But the question is, why should he use them? Anyone who reads such a poem as Shelley's "Adonais" intelligently, must see that the high-water mark of expression in rhyme and metre of this kind has already been reached. Nothing *more*

[1] The one *great* Art of the modern period—and for the obvious reason that it does not draw its beauty in any way from actual life—is Pure Music.

perfect in that line can possibly be done. *Other* work may be done, and has been done, within the same limits of form and expression; but no work can be done in the same form which shall at the same time *enlarge the boundary* of human expression. Shelley's best verse, prophetically inspired, is iridescent, like the clouds of sunrise, with all the glory which its form could possibly bear.

But Whitman had new things to say which had not been said before. He *had* to enlarge the boundary of human expression; and not knowing how to do this he reverted to the primitive law—the law that inspired Biblical and all early poetry—namely, that human feeling (if strong enough, clear enough, direct enough) compels speech to its own rhythm. Says Thoreau of the question of style: "If a man has anything to say, it drops from him simply and directly, as a stone falls to the ground. There are no two ways about it, but down it comes." Here we have "need" again lying at the root of the matter.

Whitman had the tramp of nations to put intc his verse; the whole gamut of human emotion and experience, from end to end, without omission or concealment; an intense consciousness of the Actual,

the living Whole of the Universe, and of that Whole as justifying and giving "its place" to each detail. His verse inspired with such burdens escapes from formal laws, and comes running in, line after line, line after line, as the waves of the sea come, tossing with vigor, glancing in beauty—and each wave you feel *could* not be different from what it is. That is the thing—each wave of the sea is held there in its form by the whole of Nature; and when there is the same thing in a line of verse, criticism is powerless and useless :—

> "My spirit has passed in compassion and determination around the whole earth,
> I have look'd for equals and lovers, and found them ready for me in all lands."

How simple and direct, like a stone falling to the ground! and yet how large! and how could it all possibly be expressed in any better way than it is? And yet how many such lines are there in *Leaves of Grass!*

I have said that Whitman had it in him to omit, to refuse, nothing: to be realistic in the strongest sense. But the old verse standards do most distinctly refuse certain words, phrases, effects. Then how could he use them?

He had also to express that marvellous and abounding sympathy of his, which leads him to identify himself (no mere play of words) with objects and people — "*I am* the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs . . . I am an old artillerist . . . My voice is the wife's voice," etc. Is it not evident that the swift change of mental attitude which all this involves would be impossible of expression in the old verse? The very fact of its formalities, like the ceremoniousness of a polite person, would detract from its freedom of adaptation to every possible situation, and from the close sense of contact with a living man, which the author desired to give.

Whitman's verse in its most successful passages, so magnificent in its effects, so democratic in feeling, so democratic in form, is more absolute in expression, more real in its content, burns brighter in the nearness of sunrise, even than Shelley's; and yet lies so near along to Nature and the innocent naïvety of the speech of a child, that some people are inclined to deny to it the quality of Art at all!

When Beethoven died Wagner was a boy of fourteen. Wagner accepted Beethoven to the full. His

monograph on the latter is probably the profoundest and most cordial acceptance that exists. He felt—as everyone must—that Beethoven had touched the high-water mark of the Symphony and Sonata-form —in the regions of pure Tonality, at any rate.

And indeed there are plentiful indications in the works of Beethoven that he was feeling his way beyond the old tonality and the old forms. Such are, for instance, his deliberate blurring of the sense of Key in the climaxes of his movements by the use of the neutral chord of the diminished 7th—as in the last movement of the "Moonlight" sonata; or by the rapid repetition of the same phrase successively in a vast variety of keys—an effect partly produced by earlier composers—as in the "free fantasia" portion of nearly all his sonatas and symphonies; such are his increased use of instrumental *recitative* and voice effects in his later work—as in the 9th Symphony or in Sonatas Op. 31 No. 2, Op. 81 and Op. 110—or in his actual addition of voices in the final movement of the last-mentioned Symphony.[1]

Wagner did not attempt further progress in the direction of pure Music. He saw perhaps that it was breaking away. Besides, he had things to

[1] See *infra*, chapters vii. and viii.

express which could not be expressed by it. He, too, like Whitman, returned to primitive forms. His instinct was to hark back to the realism of the Voice and of Speech. Centuries back the Art of Music sprang from that source. The old Church-music, and in fact all music up to, say, the 16th century, had hung dependent on the Voice. It used phrases, hardly to be called melodies, which were merely the inflections of Speech idealized; and for harmonies it did not venture beyond the common chords and their inversions, with the sense of glad restfulness and pure concordance which they carried with them. Palestrina's harmonies, for instance, consisting of a succession of concords in *different keys*, as we should say, sound strange to ears accustomed to pure tonality; but in truth the sense of the key-note was at that time not developed. It was not till it became thoroughly evolved that Music found a basis of its own, independent of speech. Then (round the keynote) the melody completed itself to a formal whole, and discords became possible which otherwise would have had no meaning. The gorgeous art of pure Music arose, with all its elaborate instrumentation, forms, chord-sequences, etc., and wandering afar from Speech and Actual life, expressed in

a language of its own the undying needs of the human heart; and filled, as I have hinted, with its inspirations a gap in the utterance of the other arts and a period of intense ugliness and sordidness in external affairs.

Wagner returned; he brought Music back again, instruments, discords, and all, to the Voice; to the primal needs of actual Speech. His music (he always says so himself) is nothing if not the direct outcome and reinforcement of Speech, and so of the Feeling beneath speech. Speech-cadences, even the actual words, rule his melodic sequences. His "motives," like the phrases of the old Church-music or of the minne-singers, are the spontaneous crystallizations of distinct moods; and are as far removed as possible from the tunes and formal "arias" of the Italian opera. He pays no attention to key. His phrases turn up—like Whitman's "I am"—in key after key: the same mood in ever-changing forms; a continual resurrection, lifting the hearer in the process out of the merely individual into the region of the universal. And it is by this reliance on the underlying permanence of motive, and not on the more external laws of Tune and Tonality, that he seeks to give unity to his compositions, and that

he is, in fact, able to introduce discords and other effects so daring as he does.

Yet notwithstanding the modernness of his discords, it must not be left out of sight that Wagner returns markedly to the old music in one very important point of harmony—his use of the common chord. Many of his greatest motives (like the Leit-motif of *Lohengrin*, the Graal-motif of *Parsifal*, the Walhall-motif, etc.) are simply successions of common chords or their inversions, in different keys, without a single intervening discord; and in a great number of important motives this treatment predominates. It has a curious and marked musical effect, and gives to his work an extraordinary sense of calm, majesty, and glad restfulness—sometimes even of ecstasy.

Thus we have in Wagner intense Realism, shown in his close adherence to actual speech, and in the uncompromising discord-conflict, in passages, of his motives with one another; we have a fluent and ever changing external form justified as the expression of intense internal unity of mood and motive; a strange mysticism and sense of universality conveyed by his way of lifting his hearers beyond the confines of any key; and a great underlying calm and gladness expressed by his

basic use of the common chord. These are all, we may think, marks of the Democratic character of his Art. But the same impression is conveyed by his subjects—their open-air, primitive, mystic character, his use of popular legends, of figures undraped as far as possible,[1] etc.

Now as to Millet. With the grandiosities of Paul Delaroche, the "undressed" nudities of Boucher, the gracious but trifling coquetries of Watteau, or of Fragonard, French art in each direction had come to an *impasse*. Millet, catching the inspiration of the Greek work through Michel Angelo—whom he admired beyond all—returned (some strange need compelling him) to the primitive and the actual; to the open air, and the peasant life he knew so well. With that peculiar use of low tone, which he always said was "necessary" to him, he succeeded in putting on canvas a thing which may almost

[1] As to his politico-democratic sentiments, Wagner has quite sufficiently expressed them in such passages as the following: "Our modern factories afford us the sad picture of the deepest degradation of man—constant labor killing both body and soul, without joy or love, often almost without aim"; or in his scorn of "Folk-improvers, who would trickle drops of Music's honey upon the acid sweat of ill-used factory hands, as the only possible alleviation of their sufferings."

be said not to have been attempted before—the rude outline-figure of humanity, the actual primitive life of the worker on the land.

Just as you see the same balanced pole with bucket at one end, used for drawing water in the fields of France to-day, as was used in Egypt 4000 years ago, so in the peasants of to-day, even yet, is there something which was in the peasants of Egypt then—and Millet has caught that. Never has the basic conception of simple humanity face to face with its own needs on the vast and laborious earth been given with such force, such directness, such tenderness as here. He reminds one sometimes of Blake, with his sense of the awful presence, the great unconscious human life (which in Blake one must call God) and of the vast open of Nature stretching eternally beyond.

It has been said of Bastien Lepage that all his figures interest one so intensely as *individuals.* In Millet it is just the opposite. In the dusk and indecision of their outlines they have a universal import, and the marvellous sympathy with which they are handled draws one indeed out of oneself, not into this or that person, but into a whole world of human presences, unknown and yet familiar.

That girl, half-muffled in an old cloak, standing with her immense boots clogged to earth on the clayey edge of a pond, trying with slackened rope held at arm's length to coax her cow to drink—can you not see, ten thousand times repeated, her dull lethargic home life, the silent overworked half-brutish father and brothers, the dim gleams of thought awaking in her, to so little response from anyone? That woman knitting by lamplight, pausing for a moment to count the stitches—her babe slumbering in the cradle beside her—how old as the hills is the subject, and common as grass, and yet how poignantly tender!

This universal almost mystic treatment of his themes reminds one strangely of Wagner and Whitman. Like the creations of these two, Millet's poor peasants beneath their humble clothing are somehow transformed into gods as we gaze upon them. There is, of course, a complete absence of the "imposing"; the French painter's directness and grace "as of the movements of animals" are truly Greek; and his closeness to facts and to Nature, his actuality, his Realism, are only balanced and made artistically possible by his profound tenderness and sympathy. In such pictures as the "Sheep

Girl" (*La Bergère*) with its endless distance over the plains, and loneliness, save for the crowds of sheep cropping, or the "Going to Work" (a farm lad and lass striding forth side by side in their *sabots*) he obtains by his absolute fidelity to fact those searching and irresistible effects which *can* only be given by Nature herself, and the Art which lies, so to speak, in her bosom; and in such works as the weird, gaunt, ungainly "Man with the Hoe," the "Pigkillers," or the "Vinedresser Resting," it really seems as if he had deliberately chosen the most unlikely of figures and *compelled* one to love them, the harshest discords of life and made them fall into harmony. Two men, rude and dirty, carrying a calf on a hurdle from the fields, and yet the overpowering impression conveyed is the tenderness of *their* feeling for the new-born thing!

Lastly, while there is a certain sadness in the peasant fate, which is sufficiently felt in all his work, it is remarkable how Millet by the very manner in which he touches his subjects produces a healing and soothing impression. If only occasionally in his pictures (as in the *Gardeuse d'Oies*) there is that feeling of exuberant joy which marks so much of Wagner and Whitman, still the protean

and unimprisonable sympathy, common also to the other two, which he shows brings us very near—as it always must do—to the same point—forcing us almost to believe in a life indestructible and behind the outer forms.

From these brief notes perhaps a few points as to the Democratic art of the future may emerge. When the time at length arrives for Life itself to become lovely and gracious, Art as a *separate* thing from actual life will surely surrender much of its importance; the sense and expression of Beauty will penetrate all our activities. But before that it is more than possible that there will be a great outburst of special art-production, inspired chiefly by the splendors of the coming sunrise. Of this outburst Wagner, Millet, and Whitman are the great forerunners—Shelley as the lark which almost before dawn soared from the darkened earth. Without wishing to limit too closely the achievements of these three men, we may say that certain common marks distinguish their work and methods. These are (1) Strong Realism and acceptance of the Actual—all facts of life, all discords, nothing blinked or concealed, this involving a kind of primitive directness of method

and style, the opposite pole of all formalism and artificiality; (2) an intense sense of the Whole and acceptance of the universal and unseen, by which alone the brute facts can be redeemed and set "in place," involving for its expression utmost command of all the resources of Art, perfect mastery of style, and the power of making the same motive appear in myriads of forms; and (3) a most intimate, prophetic sense of the life of the People, a perception through each individual, even the lowest, of the vast unuttered human heart, the revelation in dim outline of the gods, carrying with it a sense of sympathy, and even of triumphant joy and gladness, hardly conceived in Art before.

There is one picture of Millet's—a little-known one—which always has a great attraction for me. It contains a suggestion — conveyed also by one or two others of his, and perhaps dear to his religious-democratic mind — of the Holy Family. It is deep night, faint stars are shining, and along the edge of a far-stretching mere two figures are hurrying — in front the husband (a peasant, of course), stick in hand, determined and unflagging; behind him the wife, patient and dutiful, straining to keep up. All is dark; the figures, as in so

many of his pictures, veiled in obscure glamor, their harsher features softened, the larger more human element emerging. There is only one spot of light in the whole scene, and that is between the man's arms. It looks like a dim lamp; *it is the face of a little baby, turned towards the stars.* A faint reflection from it falls even on the face of the man. That is all. Following this light the two figures hurry on—behind them stretches the reedy, desolate mere.

And whither are they going? Perhaps after all, thought Millet, the peasants, the overtired, sad-lived laborers, whom the Earth has seen so many centuries, *are* at last passing away, travelling with the change of social conditions into another yet far-off land. He records them for us just before the dusk of transition hides their ancient features from our gaze. When the sunrise comes again the treasured babe that they carry in their arms—surely (he dreams) it will have become the Son of Man whom we wait for.



II.

Angels' Wings

"A profound impression will always find out a way of expression, and naturally seeks how to declare itself in the most forcible manner."

J. F. Millet.

TO reconcile the most romantic poignant Ideal of the heart with the severest practicality of thought and decision in its expression is one of the everlasting problems of Art—and we may say of Life. Everyone remembers the touching sentiment with which as a child he contemplated some nursery picture of an Angel, with outspread wings and a child in its arms, floating over a great city; or perhaps an engraving of Gustave Doré's "Coliseum," with the lions prowling around the corpses below, and angelic beings floating above; or at the Public Gallery some celestial vision of Fra Angelico's. And everyone remembers the shock that came to the enquiring mind, as time went on—the child-like direct materialistic question, time and again set

aside, and time and again recurring, with regard to these beautiful winged creatures—*how they put their clothes on?*

We were taken to the National Gallery, and there was Perugino's Triptych, beautiful, with the Virgin and Child in the centre, and the Archangel Michael, so strong and handsome, on the one side, and the Archangel Raphael on the other. And as we marvelled at the god-like figure clad in mail, we saw its huge dark wings spread behind it; and wondered again how they fitted through the great steel cuirass which circled his body. But the painter kept the front of the figure only towards us, and round to the back of the picture there was no means of coming. Then we looked for another picture where the back might be shown, and there was one of the "Baptism of Christ" (Piero Della Francesca's), with three stout country girls looking on at the ceremony; and they all had wings, and one of them had her back towards us; and we looked, and the wings came straight through the pink gown without the least little hole or wrinkle to show how they came through, or any buttons or hooks, or anything to show how the gown might be put on or off; and we began to doubt if they really could use such

wings, and certainly the young women did not look the least as if they were likely to fly!

And then after a time came a further question. We began to know a little about Anatomy, and that to move each limb muscles were required; but to move Wings muscles, both large and powerful, would be necessary. Where were these muscles? and, if present, they would quite alter the shape of the human back. That was another difficulty. And then again the bones of the wings would have to be jointed into the human skeleton, but it seemed that the wings were generally set somewhere onto the *shoulder-blade*, which would paralyse the wing and also paralyse the arm in a way that no Archangel even could surmount. And so at last we felt sick and miserable, and inclined to tear the wings off if we could, and to disbelieve in the existence of Angels altogether.

This so common difficulty of the child is interesting. It is interesting to see how the artists from time to time have dealt with it. It may be interesting to consider what light it throws on certain questions in Art.

The early painters used the wing in the most unblushing manner. In the Pompeiian frescoes it occurs

quite frequently, and sometimes with much artistic effect. By Giotto, Fra Angelico, and the mediæval Christian artists it is introduced with that child-like naïvety of which I have spoken, in which the sentiment is sufficient without any officious questioning as to ways and means; and is lavishly distributed to the denizens of the celestial world without the least apparent regard for little difficulties of drapery or anatomy. As time goes on, however, it becomes less frequent. Botticelli was fond of depicting angels, and in one youthful painting of his—the "Assumption of the Virgin"—over the vacated tomb now full of lilies are tiers of most ludicrous clumsy-feathered seraphs of conventional pattern; but in his more mature work it is noticeable that the wings become less and less conspicuous. In one of the two circular panels in the National Gallery, of the Madonna and Child with attendant angels, the angels are winged—but their wings are very subordinate; in the other the wings are abandoned; and in the still more perfect panel on a similar subject at Florence there are no wings. And this gradual change of treatment, which we observe for instance in Botticelli, may be seen in a general way in the whole unfolding and maturity of Christian Art.

Raphael, for example, is much more reserved in this matter than most of his predecessors. Nothing probably could be more successful than his six angels in the Vatican fresco of the "Disputa" (see p. 225)—the grace and loving fulness and yet lightness and airy motion of the figures—but here the wings are kept very inconspicuous and in the background of the figures; and as a rule—with a few exceptions—he confines his use of them to Cherubs and Cupids. [The "Archangel Michael" in the Louvre forms a curious exception; for though this is a work of Raphael's maturer time, the wings, entangled in the complications of drapery and cuirass, are very much in evidence. But it must be confessed that the whole effect of the picture is weak and inadequate; and that not only is the treatment of the wings bad, but the poise of the Archangel, on one foot on Satan's back, reminds one painfully of a ballet dancer.]

This common subordination of the wings, or the restriction of them to Cherubs and Cupids, of course suggests a merely allegorical significance in the appendages; and many of the painters obviously try to effect an artistic escape in this way. This is well seen in Correggio's lovely painting in the

National Gallery — the "Venus, Mercury, and Cupid"—lovely in genial suggestion and pagan grace, though with that curious coldness and affectation of his. Here all three figures are winged; but Venus has only a sort of gauzy shimmer on her shoulders, a mere suggestion of flight; Mercury's wings, on sandal and cap, are plainly artificial and symbolic; and only in the case of all-excused Cupid does the artist allow himself to make the tiny pinions quite distinct. Others of the painters, again, taking a more realistic line, make a partial attempt to get over the anatomical difficulty by articulating the wings in at the shoulder at the same place with the arm. Such is the treatment in A. Bellucci's "Amor e Psyche" (at Munich, I think).[1] The Love-god lies drowsily half-reclining on the couch, while Psyche bends over him with the fatal lamp. His wings are inserted at the shoulder-point, and run thence parallel with the arm to the wrist; but in truth the effect is not good, and an otherwise charming picture is damaged by it.

In reference and by way of comparison to Correggio's winged Venus, it may be noticed that

[1] And the same may be observed in the "Vision of St. Helena," by Paul Veronese.

Tintoret, in his well-known picture of "Bacchus and Ariadne," boldly makes his Venus (and a pretty solid one too) come sailing over the sea to Ariadne without wings of any kind, and the same course is adopted by Michel Angelo in his great fresco of the Sistine Chapel, where the angels of the last judgment dash to and fro in human forms untampered. In the case of Titian and Michel Angelo (and some of the other great romantic and religious artists) the feeling for reality seems to have become so strong, the thought so piercing and profound, that even in their most imaginative flights they will hardly allow themselves anything resembling a surreptitious effect, or an effect which will not stand a searching criticism. Titian, for the most part, only allows wings to appear in the by-play of his little Cupid figures—as in the Danaë picture and others; while in the work of Michel Angelo—so strong on the intellectual and scientific side, with his severe sense of anatomy—I do not know if the wing is to be found at all, unless in an unfinished painting in the National Gallery.

And this change of treatment, from Giotto, say, through Botticelli and Raphael, to Titian and Michel Angelo, cannot be directly ascribed to the renaissance

of Greek tradition or the mere supersession of Christian by Pagan sentiment; because, without dwelling on Pompeii, we find the Greeks did occasionally introduce wings in the very best period of Greek sculpture—as in the figure of Erôs (after Praxiteles) in the Vatican, or in that of the Love-god bending his bow, after Lysippus, in the Capitol. But it must be rather ascribed to the general and indirect influence of the Renaissance, which resulted in that clearer and more definite and more realistic and artistic Greek vision—a maturity of thought which brought the artists of the later period face to face with the same problems which had vexed the Greeks, and which led them on to similar solutions.

Sculpture of course presents—as it presented to the Greeks—the same difficulties in this matter as painting; but being more realistic, more anatomical, less open to illusion, it brings the problem within narrower bounds. The painters can get over any little captious queries about dress or anatomy—or anything else—by simply relegating them to the back of the canvas. But the sculptors cannot do this; they must face everything out. This gives their decisions in Art a high value, and makes their failures more conspicuous.



In the museum at Naples there was some years ago a group which was interesting as indicating a possible restoration of the Venus of Milo. It consisted of a Venus (the so-called Venus of Capua) in the well-known heroic attitude, with her left arm raised and her right hand extended to a Cupid standing before her. The chief blemish of the group was that the position of the boy, with his back to the spectator, almost necessarily forced attention on his great wings and their attachment to the body; and certainly the effect, when thus thrust upon one, was quite painful—the adhesion of the base of the wing all down the back ribs, the entire blocking of the shoulder-blades, the absence of any muscles of flight, etc. Since then, however, the Cupid has been removed, leaving the very beautiful figure of Venus standing alone—as in the illustration.

On the whole it would seem that—probably for the reasons just indicated—wings were little used in Greek sculpture. Yet that they *were* occasionally introduced—even by the artists of the best period—we have already seen. They occur on the female statue of "Victory" in the Louvre, and on several figures of Victory in the British Museum. In the

museum at Naples (see plate, p. 81) is a very beautiful and artistic bas-relief of the first meeting of Paris and Helen. It is a fateful moment in human story, the prelude to endless wars and troubles, and of course the Goddess of Love and her son are responsible for its occurrence; Aphrodite sits beside Helen, and throws a glamor of divinity around her; Erôs, in arch and naïve beauty, and with enormous pinions, ushers in Paris. The effect of the whole is most charming. But here it may be said that the study, being in bas-relief, allows of concealments and licences which would not otherwise be possible, while the very size of the wings removes them into the sphere of the fanciful and allegorical.[1]

Whatever the Greeks did in such matters has an interest for us; since it is needless to say their instinct of proportion and fitness, in Art and life, exceeded that of any other people we know. They felt so keenly the beauty and perfection and the *actuality* of the human form, that it would seem

[1] In the case of modern sculpture, Canova, in his "Cupid and Psyche," provides one of the most successful instances of the unconcealed use of wings. The composition is so good, and there is so much to occupy the attention in this group, that the difficulty is hardly felt.

they were at least *unwilling* to tamper with it in any way—even in order to gain a transcendent effect. It is noticeable that in that very perfect bronze from Herculaneum—the seated Mercury—seated on a rock and resting apparently after a long earthward journey—the wings on the ankles are represented as merely *strapped* on, as therefore symbolical or allegorical, and not organic. And in the "Praxitelean Erôs" already referred to—the so-called Genius of the Vatican—while there is practically no doubt that it was winged, the holes in the back of the figure indicate that the wings were of a fanciful character, of gilded bronze probably, and pinned on; and were not meant to have that air of reality which they would have had if executed in marble continuous with the rest of the statue.

This tendency—of which we have here noticed an example—both in the Greek Art and the Art of the Renaissance—to refine into a mere symbol, or to reject, anything which cannot be fairly distinctly thought out is very important. It is certainly very characteristic of the Greek mind. But it has, too, a certain universal importance; because it is obvious that anything that conflicts very hopelessly and

fundamentally with the reasoning faculty cannot be very permanently successful in its influence on the mind. The momentary effect may be charming, but it won't stand. It is charming to a child, it is charming to a superficial glance; but it won't bear looking into, it won't bear thinking about—the more you look into it the more uncomfortable you feel. Like Faed's sentimental pictures of peasant poverty, such work may be very touching at first sight, but at the second or third inspection you feel inclined to tear it up. Many of Turner's later pictures—and on mythical subjects—are very aggravating in this way. Even his rich color and gracious composition, his wealth of suggestion and marvellous aerial effects do not altogether atone for his solecisms — his impossible figures engaged in unknown occupations, his needless grottoes (needless except for the purpose of providing a point of deep shade), his temples which never were nor could be used. In some ways Claude, notwithstanding his formalities and coldnesses, still outlasts his rival—stands fresher, not only in unfaded color, but in virgin sense of space, of nature, of actuality, that actuality which the Greeks so prized and never left hold of.

Though it is impossible in Art, as in Life, to lay down any one principle which shall always be paramount, yet this of actuality, of thinkableness, of fidelity to experience (in a large-hearted way) is undoubtedly a foundational one. How many framed landscapes will stand a farmer's eye? How many novels are readable by a moderately intelligent artisan? And, though the farmer and the artisan are not the ultimate critics, yet their criticisms are really more important than is often supposed. Molière read his comedies first to his children and servants. Wise man! these folk criticise the sheerly material basis. But to get the material basis right is of paramount importance; and probably it is because the *greatest* works of Art always have that basis level and solid that they are almost always accepted by the masses.

How much of Art, of a second-rate character, depends on scenes and situations which won't *think*, it were best perhaps not to enquire. Here, in a studio, is a charming bit of French landscape. There is only one blemish. The cattle in the foreground are ascetically grazing on the very scantiest herbage, while immediately back of them in the very same field rises a lovely crop of green corn.

"Why, the cattle would be into that corn like a shot—there ought to be a fence between," says the farmer. "There *was* a fence of course," replies he of the picture, "but it would have spoilt the composition." True, it *would* have spoilt the composition; and therefore the fence had certainly to be removed. But the change of one thing in nature, or in a picture, or in the mind, changes a hundred other things. It is no good removing one solecism, only to leave a greater solecism. That shows weakness. Sooner or later the test of thought has to be applied; and the shock that anyone receives from the fraud of quasi-realistic angels' wings or unobservant cows may disgust him not only with the artist, but with the whole procession of ideas which the artist sets out to represent. A work of Art has to stand. It has to stand time, weather, beetles, and most of all the silent multitude of men's thoughts, emotions, experiences, perpetually invisibly gnawing at it, if anywhere they may find a weak spot. The greatest work is that which attracts most, and yet longest resists the corrosion of the thoughts which it attracts.

To return to our wings. It does not, I think, follow from all that has been said that a mature

Art must necessarily reject these appendages, or to widen the question to its general issue—that Art must limit itself to a purely intellectual Realism; but it is absolutely necessary when you leave the mere ground of actual Nature to know what you are doing, to consider intelligently the problem you are attacking, and not to slop over into weak emotionalism.

Probably, in Art as in Life, there is always a certain conflict going on between the emotional and intellectual elements. The Greek Art tends to the expression of beauty in clear, simple, and definite forms; the Gothic Art tends towards a wealth of emotion, imagery, mysticism, escaping the bounds of definite thought. The most perfect Art need, I think, reject nothing; but the Time and the Place and the Mode of treatment are all-important.

The recurrence of wings in Cupids and Angels, all down the history of Art and in so many nations, suggests a great need in the human mind—suggests the haunting vision of the real existence of beings capable of swift translation through space. If the artist sees any such vision, and feels its actuality, then he is bound to try and express it. He must

express it—and in his own way; and so long as he does express it, effectively and permanently, he may do so by any device that he likes—but not by a stout country girl floating about in the air with feathers fastened to her bodice, because that is quite unthinkable.

III.

Nature and Realism in Art

"Art has but one principle, one aim—*to produce an impression*, a powerful impression, no matter by what means, or if it be by reversing all the canons of taste and criticism."—JOHN BURROUGHS.

WE have touched in the preceding chapter on a special example of the controversy between the Material and the Ideal, of Realism *versus* Impressionism, and so forth. This is an everlasting subject; and a great deal of abstract argument has been carried into it, and appeal to "principles." But it is possible, perhaps, to regard it more as a practical question which should be solved along practical lines, and without needing reference to anything very remote or abstract.

The Fine Arts have a close analogy to the Industrial Arts, and may be looked on much in the same light. In the first place, as the Industrial Arts have to effect a definite object—and any

method is allowable which really effects the object—so the Fine Arts have to effect a definite object, and for them any method (provided it really serves) is allowable. The object of the Industrial Arts is to convey or embody a material or mechanical purpose—as in a bridge, in well-cut type, good clothing, etc. *The object of the Fine Arts is to convey an emotion.* When a cat, on the intrusion of a dog, walks across the floor on the very tips of her claws, hardly touching the ground, fiercely spitting, her back arched, and an ineffable scowl on her face, she is an artist of the finest sort; not a hair on her body but what she uses to express her feelings. But as it is obvious that *any* materials or arrangement of materials which will really effect the purpose of a bridge, or the purpose of type, or the purpose of clothing—or which will best effect those purposes—is "legitimate"; or rather, as there is no question of what is legitimate or not, but it is simply obvious that such arrangement, when discovered, *will* be used; so it is clear that any arrangement in a poem or a picture or a piece of music, or in the form and color of a jug, or in the expression of the human face, which really conveys the feeling intended, *will,* when it is discovered—in spite of

any "principles" or criticisms—inevitably be used, simply *because* it conveys the feeling.

But this proviso—that the art-work *must* convey the feeling—does itself cover a large ground of criticism. When you first enter Milan Cathedral, you are immensely impressed with the height and gloom of the interior and the dimly-seen fretwork and tracery of the roof; but when you learn—as you inevitably do—that there is no fretwork there, but that the roof is painted, you turn away, a sadder and wiser being. The Art is bad, not because there is any high and dry principle against simulated carving, but simply because the work has failed of its effect. A deception might be all right in some cases; but a deception which is sure to be found out, and whose exposure stultifies the intended impression, is, of course, a mistake. So (as we have said in the last paper) if you have conceived the sentiment of a being with human form and ethereal body, capable of swift flight through the heavenly spaces—of an angel, in fact—and you wish to convey that sentiment, that "impression," to others, you must simply do it as best you can—with wings or without wings, or by any device you like, so long as you *do* it. The one condition in all these things

is success; not of course a cheap success—for a moment or on a childish mind producing a dazzling sensation, and then afterwards rejected with gathering fury and disgust—but a success invincible, concrete and absolute.

In this light it will be seen that the conveyance of an emotion, an impression, a feeling, is by no means a mere matter of an artistic method or technique, but that it implies a curious power of diving into the mind of the auditor or spectator, every nook and cranny of it, of foreseeing how such and such combinations will affect such mind; what associations, what criticisms, what misunderstandings they will call forth; and a power of shaping the materials accordingly: a singular combination, in fact, of masterfulness and sympathy. And that is why the *great* artists in literature and the plastic arts, the Rembrandt, the Titian, or the Shakespeare, have generally been men of such wide humanity and knowledge of the world. The human *mind* itself is, in fact, their plastic material, which, knowing so well in all its capabilities, they can mould at will to the emotional forms of which they themselves are masters.

And here let it be noted that Art is not concerned

with conveying a *Thought*. That is rather the province of ordinary Language. As far as a Drama, a Picture, or a Poem, merely convey intelligence of new thoughts or ideas they are not Art. To be artistic they must excite *emotion*. People sometimes ask, What is the Meaning of such and such a work? Meaning be hanged! There is certainly no harm in its having a definite meaning or moral interwoven with its structure; in some cases that may be quite necessary; but the real question is, What contagion of *feeling* does it communicate from the breast of the author to that of his audience?

In the second place, the Fine Arts have a close analogy to the Industrial Arts in this respect—that the dignity or importance of the emotion conveyed in the former case may vary as much as the grandeur of the practical result in the latter. A Brooklyn bridge and a pencil-sharpener may both be perfect adaptations of Industrial Art to their several purposes, but one is of incomparably greater scope and importance than the other; and *Don Giovanni* may be—certainly is in its way—as perfect music as *Tristan and Isolde*, and yet may show a less depth and range of emotion.

There is a constant confusion of criticism over this

matter, which after all is very simple. The *intention* of a work and its *execution* are two different things. A work cannot properly be called artistic unless its execution fulfils the intention or nearly so. The execution may be good or bad; and the result may, if you like, be called good Art or bad Art accordingly. But it is obviously much more difficult to attain satisfactory execution in a work of large range and scope—say in a Shakespearian drama—than in a trivial subject like a *vers-de-société;* and therefore the criticism of an art-work cannot be dismissed by a simple reference to perfection of execution without any consideration of the grandeur and beauty of the *motive.* The motive may even contain in itself an element of ugliness. A picture, for instance, of the human form may be painted merely in order to excite lust. It may be very artfully and even artistically painted; yet the meanness and sordidness of the intention will inevitably in the long run show itself and detract from the beauty of the picture. It is true that Art has nothing to do with copy-book morality. But from another point of view it may be said that morality (in its large and broad sense) is itself an Art. It is the Art of life, and so the greatest of Arts. To convey emotions

of that class which inspire Life and give it its finest utterance is obviously art-work of the best sort. The Greeks felt this, and practically did not separate ethics from æsthetics. To them a good, a noble, action was simply one which satisfied their artistic sense, their sense of beauty, in the sphere of morals.

There has therefore to be considered, in judging any work of Art, besides perfection of execution, the grandeur, dignity, sincerity, tenderness—in short, the beauty—of the motive. And these two things may be kept separate in thought, as two diverse elements in the total effect, and need not be confused with each other; though of course practically they blend and interlock continually—as we say the soul does with the body.

So far we have dealt with the very broad points of resemblance between the Fine Arts and the Industrial Arts in their methods; we now come to the further question of materials. When the artist (of the finer kind) has clearly possessed himself of the emotion or motive which he intends to convey—be it simple or complex—or, which is more to the point, when the emotion has taken possession of *him*, and is pressing for utterance; and when he

clearly sees that in order to convey the impression to others he may use *any* means, provided he really does convey it, and does not stultify his own work by any shallow padding or deception or weakness or inadvertence or misunderstanding of the mind of his audience (altogether a very complicated affair); then there arises the question of what *materials* he has at hand and can use for the expression—and to this question I will now turn.

Speaking of Art generally, and making such rough generalizations as in these matters are alone feasible, we may perhaps say that the artist can draw his materials for the conveyance of emotion from three main sources, namely, (1) from Nature and the outer world (including in that expression human life and history); (2) from the Physiological basis of emotion in the human body; and (3) from the Conventional symbols and associations current in the society around him. In the present paper I will take the first of these.

Nature and real life constitute one of the most important — if not the most important — of the sources that the artist draws on for the expression of feeling. And this not because Art is at all bound to Nature, but for the simple reason that from

infancy onwards the events and apparitions of the outer world are inextricably interwoven with our pleasures, pains, and emotions generally; and therefore to conjure up a scene from life or an object from Nature is almost infallibly to conjure up the emotion which from infancy has been associated with that scene or object. The mere utterance of the word "thunder" carries with it a wave of feeling. A simple tale of heroism may bring tears to the eyes. The artist finds in Nature and the outer world an enormous mass of such emotional material ready made to his hand, so to speak. He is not obliged to use it; but one can only say that he is a fool if he despises it.

Schiller (in his essay *Ueber Naïve und Sentimentalische Dichtung*) even goes as far as to say that "the poet either *is* Nature or seeks after Nature." The one he calls the naïve, the other the sentimental, poet. Albert Dürer says "Art lies hidden in Nature; those who can have only to tear it forth." Millet says "Nature is rich enough to supply us all." Anyhow, it is clear that the use of Nature and real life is of the first importance in Art. And it is clear, too, that to a certain extent the more direct and homely the material is, the more telling and

irresistible is the effect. Everyone knows that wild flowers brought into a sick room are dearer and more delightful to the patient than the choicest hothouse blossoms. The colonist long absent from home is touched to tears by the sight of the little English daisy. A snowdrop or a wild rose come loaded with lifelong associations and emotions, where the most gorgeous South American orchid may only leave one cold or curious. And so some of the very greatest effects in Literature and Art generally are produced by the most homely, the most common, situations, the very simplest words and phrases and combinations.

It is for these reasons that verisimilitude is generally required in novels, pictures, plays and so forth: not that there is any absolute command to keep to real life and facts as we know them, but because in deserting this ground we clearly lose so much. Everyone has thrilled to the story of "Oliver Twist"; but a novel whose characters were giants and fairies, or whose scene were laid among the inhabitants of Mars, would never touch us very deeply, simply because it would rouse no familiar emotional associations.

In the childhood of races and nations this fidelity to facts does not count for so much. Exaggerations

and distortions are common; dragons and sea-monsters abound; horses leap over wide rivers; fairies and giants appear; and miracles are plentiful. And this because in childhood the vision of what is consistent and possible is not so clear, and because the emotions which chiefly crave for expression are emotions of fear and awe and wonderment, which are excited by strange and grotesque things. The growing mind of man, in fact, full of fear and wonder before the mystery of Nature, peoples that Nature with the forms that best reflect its own state. Thus in the *Iliad* of Homer, side by side with the minutely faithful accounts of the combats of the heroes (uncommonly resembling the combats of school-boys nowadays), move in and out through the limpid air the forms of the gods enacting wondrous miracles. Apollo and Athene change themselves into phantom likenesses of Æneas or Diomed, and become the delusive centres of doubtful battles. Unaccountable powers are everywhere present which upset all foregone conclusions. Or in Dante's *Inferno*, notwithstanding the innumerable details derived from terrestrial experience and portrayed in an almost annoyingly dry and realistic fashion, there is throughout the poem an excess of the supernatural

—of lurid light, of doom and gloom, diabolical ingenuity of torment, awful severity of retribution; the total effect seeming to be, by extremity of tension, to wake in rude and fleshly men that sense of guilt and terror of conscience which alone will drive them up the difficult stairs that lead to immortal life

But with maturity, whether of the individual or the race, the realistic side gathers strength; the reliance on actual experience becomes greater, the class of emotion which seeks for expression depends less on distortion and excess, and more on the central and well-balanced; and the artistic method changes accordingly. As the scientific inventor finds there is hardly any mechanical or other device which has not been forestalled by some living creature or organism, so the artist finds there is hardly any emotional combination which is not portrayed and represented in some way or other in actual life and Nature. It remains, then, only for him to

[1] *Paradise Lost*, however, seems to be an anachronism. The apparatus of devils, fiery lakes, torments of the damned, and pious conversations, which in Dante have a certain child-like naïvety, become in Milton, despite some qualities of space and largeness, rather childish and artificial. One feels that the age of the miraculous —for Milton himself at any rate—had really passed, and that there was an affectation in this attempt to restore it.

select the document, so to say, and to let Nature speak for herself. The way, indeed, some artists have of *standing aside* and letting you look on the scene with them is very remarkable. Says Lao-Tsze: "By non-action there is nothing which may not be done." And so in Art, one may almost think, there is nothing which may not be done by not doing it, *i.e.*, by letting Nature do it for you.

Everyone feels this in the great playwrights. They do not put themselves in evidence by the footlights, pulling their characters this way and that, forcing them to point morals against their will. They slip out, rather, and leave the figures to tell their own tale. Voltaire called Shakespeare barbaric, simply because he did *not* cut and prune his work, like trimmed yew trees, to a conventional pattern. And it was for the same reason, no doubt, that Schiller, with genuine admiration, termed the famous dramatist "naïve."

> "A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
> I see a wild civility,
> Doth more bewitch me than when Art
> Is too precise in every part."

There is — as has always been recognized — a handling of Art (which may be illustrated by the stanza just quoted) where the touch is so perfect,

so light, so firm, so distinguished, so inevitable, and yet so free from all nameable motive—from affectation, display, moral purpose, or obedience to any set rule or convention—that the unskilled observer doubts whether there is any Art at all in the matter. And certainly we must at times think that there is some kind of diabolic collusion between Nature and the artist when they can interpret each other so well, and when the latter can signalise his supreme effects (as Nature does hers) by making them appear *accidental.*

This effect of actuality, of the accidental-inevitable, is found more or less in every great artist, in whatever department. It is conspicuous in the great English novelists — in Fielding, Charlotte Brontë, Thackeray, George Eliot; in some of the poets and dramatists, as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Middleton, Herrick, Gray, Goldsmith, Burns, parts of Wordsworth;[1] in the comedies of Molière, in the landscapes of Constable, the village scenes of Webster, the peasant life of J. F. Millet; in the Dutch scenes of Hobbema, Teniers, Van de Velde;

[1] It is especially remarkable in many passages of Whitman, because the audacity of style and subject rouse criticism almost to fury, and yet, when you define on any point, there he is in an impregnable position, simply stating, as it were, an incontrovertible fact.

the ragged urchins of Murillo; the great imaginative works of Titian, and (to a lesser degree) of Michel Angelo and Raphael; and, of course, in the works of the great portrait-painters—the portraits of Rembrandt and Frans Hals, of the incomparable Velasquez, of Titian, Moroni, Raphael, Van Dyck, Gainsborough, G. F. Watts, and others.

In the range of Greek statuary the same thing is very striking. Consider the "Drunken Faun," for instance, thrown back in riotous good humor with himself and the world—his hand resting on a wine-skin; or the "Discobolus," the powerful young quoit-thrower, stooping to make his cast, energy streaming through his body down to his very toes, which grip the ground; or that lovely "Diana" of the Vatican arrested in unconscious grace — her body slightly inclined forward, her hands just raised—as she comes upon her sleeping Endymion; or the "Dying Gaul" (Gladiator) leaning on his arm, in the very act to fall. What can one say of such things, except that they are so near the reality that criticism is mute before them? And yet they are not imitation. Art glides past imitation and leaves it behind, as the soul glides past the body. For imitation only

deals with the outer surface of the thing, but Art gives the whole nature *in* the thing, the informing spirit. This is well seen in the last-mentioned figure — the "Dying Gaul" — where, behind the exquisite contour and modelling of limbs and body, one is aware with an almost painful acuteness of the life and vitality ebbing in the veins; and behind the ebbing life one is aware of the failing consciousness of the man, his pain, his pluck, his hurrying fading thoughts; and behind all that, again, of his serene human spirit, victor and unchanged through all. There is, indeed, something very remarkable about this statue; for though it probably dates from some two centuries before the Christian era, it betrays a depth of sympathy with the barbarian very unusual or almost quite unknown in the Athenian sculptors of that period, a fact which perhaps lends support to the theory that it is of Pergamenian origin, and that it is one of the figures, or a copy of one of the figures, presented by Attalos I. of Pergamum to the Athenians to commemorate his victories over the Gauls.

In all these cases of the use of Nature and actual life in Art the artist concerns himself to produce his emotional effect through the mediumship of outer

Nature. He draws the scene as best he can, and leaves it to convey the effect for him. You want, for instance, to portray a certain character. If you are a philosopher you will probably describe it rather laboriously in an analytic way—as so much courage, so much tenderness, and so forth; but if you are a painter you will paint the face and outer lineaments of the man *in such a way that the character speaks for itself through them*, or if a novelist you will draw his actions to the same purpose and effect. The perception of this immense expressional value of the actual world has led, by a kind of excess, to the great modern developments of Realism.

There are two main directions of modern Realism, more or less distinct from each other, one which tends to an over-elaborate reproduction of Nature, forgetful of the fact that no representation has any value *except* for expression; the other which tends to reproduction of those aspects of Nature—the ugly, the obscene, the criminal, and so forth—which are generally ignored or set aside as not available. The first direction is obviously an error. Medical dictionaries, guide-books, encyclopædias—the mere portrayal of actual facts or scenes—do not fall under the head of Art. If the portrayal is effected in such a manner

as *not* to bring out the associated emotions, or if it bring out the emotions in such a disjointed way as not to combine with each other to a total effect, the method is mere imitation, and the artistic result *nil*. All elaborate Realism runs this risk—the more elaborate it is the more difficulty in making each detail tell—and the moment a detail ceases to tell, ceases to be organic, the risk of its becoming mere lumber, mere "document." Then follows one of the greatest troubles in Art, that of dullness, from which, it must be confessed, even the novels of Zola and the longer stories of Tolstoy—notwithstanding the fine work in them—are not free.

The other direction of Realism is vastly more important. In a great mass of the ruder facts of life, hitherto somewhat untouched — in wounds and death, in physiological facts, in sex, in the common life of the mass-people, in poverty, in criminality, in ignorance—lie huge stores of associations capable of rousing the most keen and complex emotions. The portrayal of the root facts of life, like those of sex, necessarily touches the springs of the most imperative and, in a sense, most important feelings. Any artist must see that these associations,

these emotions, are there for his use. Yet of course it does not follow that they are easy to use. In fact, just because they are so powerful and so deeply implicated in life it is difficult to disentangle and show them in harmonious relation with the rest of Nature. The ugliness, the dirt, the obscenities, the criminalities, have immense, priceless, artistic value, as soon as—like the discords in music—they can be made to lead to their proper resolutions; as soon as they are burnt up like fuel, and rendered transparent, in the great human emotions which are competent to dissolve them. "Le laid c'est le beau," said some of the early critics of Realism. But even that is not quite true! For all depends upon treatment, and only the great masters can handle the toughest facts. Whitman's lines, "The City Dead-house," with their deep tenderness for the "poor dead prostitute"—their feeling so ardent that it searches through and renders incandescent as with fire all the unclean details—have, short as they are, a grander total effect, I think, than Zola's novel ending with the death of Nana. There is the same strong Realism in both works, and much the same general intention of sympathy; but in the latter the sympathy expressed (or excited in the reader) hardly rises above

a cold and intellectual level, while in the former it is so wonderfully personal and intense. Indeed, it is possible (in justification of this kind of Realism) that the highest, most ethereal and spiritual reaches of the human mind can only be expressed by this method of the inclusion of the grossest and crudest material; and that a spirituality which *ex*cludes is a poor affair after all. The firmer one's foothold on the ground the more effective undoubtedly is one's reach upward. It is the rendering on canvas of rude rock and earth which gives distance and ethereal beauty to the sky; and again it is the light from the sky alone which makes the portrayal of rock and mud feasible or tolerable.

In much of the modern realistic work there is plenty of rock and mud, but the skylight is wanting. Long and minute descriptions of sexual situations, of battle-field horrors, of the grimy hovels and habits of the slums or the festal banquets of the rich, are often devoid of any large emotional result, and perhaps only serve to satisfy a certain curiosity; and notwithstanding occasional effects of gruesomeness or splendor are, on the whole, dull. Nevertheless, though such things are not Art, or only Art of a poor sort, it may be said that their production has meant

the unearthing of a vast amount of material which, in the hands of future masters, may be available for the most searching effects. To Zola we owe much in this way. Ibsen, by his tragic use of the most vulgar situations—as in "Ghosts," "Little Eyolf," and "An Enemy of the People"—illustrates the finer issue of the realistic method; though in Ibsen it is true that the scientific scalpel is still too prominent, and we miss the large human feeling and drawing of character which we find in some of Sudermann's plays, like *Magda* and *Die Ehre*, and which brings their Realism, I think, up to the highest level reached in modern drama.

But if we would go back to the most artistic use of actual life and Nature, and to a perfect example of Realism in its best form, we cannot do better than look at the frieze of the Parthenon. Many, perhaps most, races, in their barbaric stage, tend to make pictorial illustrations of some kind of the life going on around them. Picture-language, and gesture-language were the earliest means of expression. The Greeks, at the moment as it were of their emergence from barbarism into civilization, sculptured on the frieze of their great Temple an illustration, a life-like replica, of the great procession

of their religious year, at the festival of the Panathenaia—the procession of all the life and manhood and womanhood and learning and wealth and beauty of Athens, in dedication to Athené, the goddess and the embodiment of the city. Though Greek sculpture produced at a later date individual statues more elaborate, more consciously artistic, richer in force and feeling, than anything in this frieze, yet I doubt if it produced anything which leaves a purer, a more harmonious, and on the whole a more lovely impression. The frieze marks just the distinction insisted on above, of naïve from sentimental Art. It marks the culminating moment before Art passed over into consciously *seeking* Nature. The workmanship is so naïve, so spontaneous, so joyous, so unconscious-proud in its strength and its skill. The whole scene moves again before us—the young warriors on horseback or on foot, in the beauty and pride of manhood; the horses themselves champing at the bit; the chariots so well-made, so swift; the elders and councillors of the city, in sober raiment and bearded wisdom, bearing olive-branches; the bevies of maidens with baskets of offerings to their prototype, the virgin goddess; the cattle decorated for sacrifice, the drovers, the artisans, the slaves—all dedicated—the lives of

the warriors, the wisdom of the old men, the hearts of the women, the work of the toilers and the blood of the beautiful animals—to her who is the common life of them all, Athené, the soul of Athens.

The frieze was a simple transcript of actual facts which might be witnessed every year; and yet, as a whole, it is more beautiful, more artistic, perhaps, than any other work in the world. And why? Because it contains a double beauty. It is an artistic representation of an actual life which was itself artistic in the highest sense. To understand what this means, let anyone consider the result of making an equally realistic picture of a modern Lord Mayor's Show or Jubilee Procession through the streets of London! Even the panorama of Shakespeare's historical plays fails of the best effects, because the life itself which he represented contained no dominating conception higher than the feuds of barons and of kings and the loves and hates of human beings therein entangled. It was the wonder of the Athenian art-period that for once at least, then, in the history of the world, the very details of the daily life of the City were all united by the threads of poetry, of tradition, of custom, of religion, in one overruling idea of order, harmony,

beauty, and dedication to the gods and the Common life; so that the simplest purest Realism became at once the means of expressing the highest artistic feeling. The contagion of feeling induced by a work like the Parthenon-frieze was such as to unite the people in the closest solidarity.

Never before probably, and certainly never since, have Nature and Art fused together so completely. Realism to-day, however skilful, almost necessarily contains ugliness, because the *motive* of life generally is ugly. Never again will Art attain to its largest and best expressions, till daily life itself once more is penetrated with beauty, and with the spirit of dedication—each part to the service of the Whole.

NOTE.—"The agreement between experience and thought which in man's earlier state *really* existed, exists now only in *ideal* . . . is no longer a fact of his life. If then one turns the conception of Poesy (which is nothing else than the finding by Humanity of its completest possible expression) on these two states of life, it follows that in the earlier and more natural one, where Man still moves, with all his powers, in harmonious unity, and his entire nature expresses itself in full in actual life, the Poetic Art consists in the most complete possible representation of the Actual—while on the other hand in the present state of Culture, where that harmonious co-operation of his whole nature is only an Idea, it consists . . . in the representation of what is Ideal." (From SCHILLER'S *Naïve und Sentimentalische Dichtung.*)



IV.

The Human Body in its Relation to Art

"EACH part to the service of the Whole." Nowhere do we find this principle more completely carried out than in the human Body—the healthy human Body; and so the body in some sense provides a key to the understanding of Art. Perhaps we may look upon it as one of the most perfect of art-products.

For every part relates itself to some emotion or utterance. The feet are for swiftness, the hands for mastery and skill; the lips—the eyes—ah! what do they not convey? the heart, the bowels, the lungs, thrill with feeling; they vibrate and pant and yearn and burn in response to and expression of the lightning-flashes and slow auroral changes of the inner self—that inner self which is continually emerging, coming nearer to its expression—like the

figure in Michel Angelo's statue of Day, whose brow and eyes gleam on us from the half-chiselled stone.

The body is the sign of what Man has attained to express so far. As the body of Man is more beautiful than that of the Animals, just so far has man reached a fuller self-expression than the animals. To look upon it—the whole body, not the face only—and to relate what you see to the inner meanings, to absorb insensibly all its lessons; not to reason too much about the matter, for it escapes analysis, but to gaze and absorb; is to learn much about Art.

And it is not the *form* only, but the movement; and not the movement only, but every indication or need proceeding from physiological structure. One of the most primitive of the arts is Dancing. It is a language rooted in the body. The savage leaps from the circle of his mates seated on the ground, and dances. It is a dance of exultation, a dance of love, a dance of war and menace. Instinct provides him with the appropriate movements. Their meaning is at once understood and conveyed to the others. A contagion seizes the whole group. They join, and are united for the moment in one emotion. Add rude shouts and

songs, and the delirium produced by the perpetual rhythm of the tom-tom, and you already have the germ of an opera!

Music is born together with dancing, as its twin. Both are intensely physiological, and the most direct of the arts. Expression, in them, takes its own form from the structural needs of the Muscles or of the Ear, borrowing nothing, or a very minimum, from outer Nature or human Custom. Emotion goes straight to Expression, with no intervening thought-forms or images derived from the world around.

And yet the needs and habits of the Muscles date from the farthest ages of evolution and embody the experience of our countless ancestors; while the structure of the Ear answers to the vibrations and numerical relations of all Matter (revealing simplicity and harmony in some ratios and perplexity and strife in others). And so Dancing brings us into touch with the most primitive needs and associations, which our minds and bodies share in common with the whole animal world; Music opens the door for us into the very heart of Nature and among the harmonies of the spheres, as the wise men said of old.

Certain it is, with regard to Music, that in some obscure manner, which we can partly and yet only partly follow, the movement of sound through musical intervals (so-called harmonious or inharmonious), the concord or discord in all degrees of two or more notes played or sung together, are associated with all the changing shades of human emotion. Emotion itself is a vibration. The vibrations of sound reaching up find an answer within us; and in this way such feelings as those of harmonious Co-operation, Misunderstanding, Doubt, Suspense, Discord, Anger, Hope, Fear, Confidence, Hatred and innumerable others, are directly transmitted. The musical composer, making use of these associations, expresses all the thoughts of his heart, and plays in marvellous wise on the whole gamut of human feeling, even as he plays on the key-board of his instrument.

He says: "See! this is how all these feelings pass in my mind. These discords resolve themselves into harmony along this line; these harmonies are betrayed into dissonance thus. This passage of sorrow leads after all to gladness; these rising notes of hope and expectation come to a pause (on an interrupted cadence) and fall away again. That is

how the succession of emotional effects commends itself to me."

He is in fact trying to speak to us, as plainly as he can—showing us not the chain of his *thoughts*, as people do when they use words, but the network of his *feelings*. But the way in which his feelings are woven together shows his grade of culture, of physiological evolution. And so Music is the expression of this. When the new musician comes whom we have not heard before, we say "Ah! that man understands me, I understand him—he answers to my heart's desire. True, he has not uttered an intelligible word, not a thought which I can define; but he has revealed to me my own feelings, slumbering within, unborn, as it were in each other's arms."[1]

The Music of each age, of each race, betrays the grade of evolution, the emotional development, of those who appreciate it. The *fortissimo* shock in Haydn's "Surprise Symphony" is a very simple and innocent physiological effect. In Beethoven's *Coriolanus* overture, there is an equally certain,

[1] In this way, Art acts on the individual mind, the individual body, waking and exercising its faculties. "Emotion being largely a muscular process, Art" says Havelock Ellis "is from this point of view the athletics of the emotions."

though more subtle, innuendo of the same kind, which might possibly have been intelligible to Haydn, but decidedly would not have been to Palestrina. I mean the running semitone discord in the accompaniment to the rather bewildered air or motive which represents Coriolanus' feelings when his wife and mother kneel before him—the discord suggesting clearly enough the pricks and anguish of his own conscience. Wherever you go in Music you find this appeal to the innermost structure of the Mind and Body—mostly indeed at a point where it is difficult to separate Mind *from* Body. The simple, vigorous harmonies and strong rhythm of a rousing march have their effect on the nervous system, easy enough to trace; nor does it require the penetration of a Tolstoy to warn us against the undulating grace and suspended resolutions of a good waltz! There is no art, as we have said, in which feeling moves *more* direct from the author to his audience. Not even with the divine use of words is there so close a touch.

But the other Arts, though more indirect, have their physiological side too. In painting, sculpture, architecture, etc., there is a direct appeal through the very nature of form and color. The Eye has its

needs as well as the Ear. There is satisfaction to the eye in harmony and grace of form, there is embarrassment and confusion in disordered lines, quite apart from the association of these forms and lines with objects of experience. An Etruscan border charms by its mazy simplicity, without need to refer the design to the lines of a tortoise-shell or a key or any other natural object. The same with the natural harmonies and discords of color, and the very varied emotional effects of color-combinations. And thus it is that we get a Decorative Art—in painting, sculpture, etc.—which may in cases stand by itself alone, resting on purely physiological grounds, though generally also having something of another group of associations—the Conventional —in it.

In the composition of a picture, though the picture may mainly rely for its effect on the representation of Nature, yet this physiological side—in the massing of light and shade, in the decorative arrangement of the main outlines, and in the general color-scheme — inevitably comes in. What effects of massed color in Titian, or of *chiaroscuro* in Rembrandt, what charm of mere line in the intellectual Leonardo da Vinci. or in

Leighton! In some schools of painting, as in the Japanese and the modern Impressionist work, it is this side which is chiefly relied on. How magical are some of the Japanese landscapes! A mountain outline, a suggestion of mist below, a promontory running into a lake, a few bold quaint dashes in the foreground. What is the subject? One hardly knows. Yet there is an effect as of Music. The fancy is fired, and each time one looks there is a new beauty. No one imagines when he is enjoying a Nocturne on the Thames by Whistler or a landscape by Hokusai or Korin that the picture has anything to do with London Bridge or Fusi Yama, except so far as the supposed scene serves as an *excuse* for conveying those subtle emotional effects which the musical soul of the artist gave out when breathed on as it were by Nature. "Nature indeed" writes Whistler[1] "contains the elements in colour and form of all pictures, as the key-board contains the notes of all Music. But the artist is born to pick, and choose, and group with science these elements, that the result may be beautiful—as the musician gathers his notes, and forms chords, until he brings forth from chaos

[1] See R. Muther, *History of Modern Painting*, vol. iii. p. 655.

glorious harmony." The consummation of Painting will be reached, he believes, "when there is a public which will make no demand for definite subjects, but be content with tones and harmonious combinations of colour."

This last must be looked upon as a Whistlerian exaggeration, yet it intimates clearly the fact that Painting has a purely physiological side, and can express emotion to some extent directly, like Music. It is the same in Literature. In the cadences, alliterations and rhythms both of Verse and good Prose there are these effects which (with rhyme added) are particularly strong in Verse. No absolute line of course can be drawn between the forms of Prose and Poetry. Wherever there is emotion concerned in the thought there will be emotional effects in the language—that is, there will be rhythm — and the wavelike rhythms and rhymes and recurrences will take on the simplest and briefest or the most complex and far-reaching forms according to the character of the emotion concerned — just as they do in Music. There is something inevitable about this, and beyond the author's control — however much he may try to manufacture effects. Byron took the greatest

trouble with his verses, but notwithstanding his brilliant rhymes, seldom turned out a really rhythmical stanza; because in fact the emotional under-current was not strong. If you read *Childe Harold* you can mark off the verses which are *felt* from those which are merely "composed," as it were in an instant. They leap to the ear and to the heart. Read the alternating tragedy and comedy of Carlyle's *French Revolution*, and you realise how directly, how inevitably, the emotion of the man uses the word-undulations for its own conveyance. Take Swinburne's lines:—

"Men are the heart-beats of Man, the plumes that feather his wings;
Storm-worn, since Being began, with the Wind and thunder of Things."

Apart from their meaning—which anyhow is not very clear!—who can escape their strange reverberant innuendo? Distant nations whose languages are obsolete, men and women long dead, still give us something direct out of their hearts. What life, what breadth, what destiny there is in the large roll—as of the sea-waves—in Homer! How like the expression of his lips is the clipped decision of Dante's *Terza Rima*, with its gracious yet painful formality! How the sweet

geniality of the *Canterbury Tales* comes out in their rhythm, or the exquisite sparkle and fire of Herrick in his superb refrains! Mark the great balanced weighty flow of the sentences in Milton's *Areopagitica*, and see how expressive they are of the strong emotion towards freedom with which the whole essay is charged :—

"Good and evil we know in the field of this World grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed on Psyche as an incessant labour to cull out, and sort asunder, were not more intermixt."

Then read a verse of Gray's *Elegy* :—

"For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share."

Or the following from *Adonais* :—

"Ah woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Season's bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,

> And build their mossy homes in field and brere ;
> And the green lizard and the golden snake,
> Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

And then, say, a stanza from Francis Adams, the revolutionary poet :—

> "In the black night, along the mud-deep roads,
> Amid the threatening boughs and ghastly streams,
> Hark ! sounds that gird the darknesses like goads,
> Murmurs and rumours and reverberant dreams,
> Tramplings, breaths, movements, and a little light—
> The marching of the Army of the Night."

And see how utterly different in the four quotations is the technical effect of the mere sounds and syllables : the sturdy rise, culmination and fall, as of a great wave, the effect of power and determination, in the first one ; the simple iambic lulling reiteration of the second ; the long melodious sweep and palpitating aerial resonance of the third ; the muttered, grinding, jostling noise of the last. It is evident that the Elegy—whose emotion is simple and uniform throughout, though exquisitely tender —does naturally not clothe itself in so complex a rhythm as any of the others, whose subject-matter is so much more diverse and complex. And if one compares the Spenserian stanza in the *Fairy Queen* itself, where it is simply used to tell a story, with its adaptation here by Shelley to a lyrical expression

of the burden of the universe, the same difference of rhythm comes out, though the form is technically unaltered.[1]

Again in all dramatic sequences there is a rhythm which must correspond (if it is to have effect) to the natural rhythm of human feeling. What an extraordinary impression is produced by the violent and continued knocking at Macbeth's castle-door, coming just after the murder has been committed—the ill-conscience that can never sleep again! and how the effect is heightened by the contrast of the drowsy and absurd porter turning out to unbar the wicket! Mere physiology ordains for us beforehand the outline of a drama or a novel or a symphony. It forbids an unbroken succession of violent sensations; it forbids an unbroken succession of similar sensations; it prepares us as a rule for

[1] In latest times, especially in France, there has been a great effort to carry these direct sensuous and musical effects in Language to the same extreme as has been attempted in Painting. The verse of Verlaine or the prose of Mallarmé is made to coruscate with color or tinkle with vibrating syllables. There are bright jewel-points, and backgrounds of suffused tint, there are fantastically clear details and mysterious obscurities, there are accords and dissonances of sound. And certainly there is a result. Swoons and shudders of various kinds are duly conveyed. But after all, while it is right enough that Poetry should exercise all its prerogatives, it is foolish of it to vacate its throne in order to snatch the diadem of another Art; and we can only look upon much of this modern work as the trifling of folk who have nothing particular to tell us!

a slow culmination and a rapid denouement, and tells us that it is impossible to produce the greatest effects without a long foreground and ascent of emotion.

These are just a few instances of the way in which Art is predetermined by the structure of the Body. The Soul builds the Body; the needs of the Body build the forms of Art; Art builds the great Cathedral of the world, in which men meet, as it were, to exchange emotions and feelings with each other, and to arrive at the knowledge and the certainty of their Common Life.

That the representation of the body in Art should touch us so nearly, and that the sense of Beauty should be so especially associated with the delineation of the human figure may now seem easy to understand. For every outline and feature of the latter wakes trains of emotion in us, and is radiant with meanings. To look at a perfect body, in which all the parts are harmonized and in healthful relation, is to have by suggestion all the emotions of which the soul is capable brought into touch with each other. Thus there awakes far back in the mind a sense of harmony or health of the Soul itself—the stirring within us of some divine and universal Being—to be capable of feeling which is indeed the most

excellent prerogative of Man; a sense which we endeavour to express by the word Beauty, and the conveyance of which is the highest message of Art.[1]

If these things are so, how immensely important, both for Art and Life, is the redemption and thorough acknowledgment of the Body—that body which Luxury and Puritanism between them have so soiled and desecrated! How important the perfecting of the body on the one hand, and the frank acceptation of it on the other! If the harmonious consent of all the emotions and faculties is the means of the highest expression of Man, how can this consent be conveyed if a large group of his faculties be not represented at all? Or how again can it be conveyed if—by a natural reaction—the same group be absurdly *exaggerated* in its relation to the rest. Yet the whole group (to take one instance) of the sexual functions, with the emotions

[1] The sense of Beauty, indeed, seems to be some strange intimation or perception of the unity of all beings. It is the perception through the senses of universal relations in an object; of the soul (or whole) by which alone after all the object exists—and which is sometimes seen, as it were a halo, round it. A flake of snow becomes beautiful directly we perceive its six-rayed crystalline structure, which relates it to all of Nature, and to a thousand other things in our minds. A man doing work needed by society commands our sense of Beauty. Truth may perhaps be defined as the intellectual statement of these relations; and Goodness as our obedience to them.

which they indicate, has during the modern period suffered this alternate suppression and exaggeration —a group of course of the very greatest importance. The redemption of Sex, the healthy and natural treatment of it in Art, is one of the greatest works any artist of to-day has before him to carry out. The painter who shall first succeed in rendering the nude on canvas boldly and freely in this respect, and yet harmoniously and sanely in relation to all the other human faculties, will have achieved a work which can scarcely be said to have been attempted since the time of Michel Angelo. (For unfortunately the modern work—with its blanched boudoir types, self-conscious either in their modesty or their brazenness—has not as yet reached the point where it can be called either sane or harmonious.)

The same with the literary artist, the poet or novelist. Notwithstanding the outlines sketched by Whitman, and less healthily by Zola and Ibsen, the world still waits for anything like a large and artistic treatment of this grand subject. It is hardly too much to say that during the long anæmic period since the Elizabethan writers, the suppression of the sexual has led to the enfeeblement of all the highest work in English literature. To read Milton, Shelley,



Wordsworth, or Tennyson or Browning, is certainly to be aware of great beauties; but it is also to feel (perhaps foolishly) how much more lovely and how much stronger *might* have been the work of each of these artists if he had not thought it necessary to wipe from his palette one of the primary colors.

Physiology and Zoology indeed show us that the Sexual lies at the root of Beauty and the Art-sense—that it cannot and must not be ignored. The sex-life, from the most primitive forms onwards, seeks union, cohesion. Everywhere it is making signals of attraction: in plants by the bright colors and forms of the flowers; in birds by the winning sweetness of their song. The bower-bird of Australia decorates its "run" with flowers and feathers, the Amblyornis of New Guinea spreads for its amours a mossy lawn, which it ornaments with shells and berries; with its tail — a hundred gorgeous eyes quivering in the sun—the peacock mesmerizes its mate; the elks hoot to each other across the forests; the fireflies flash their lamps at night; the air is full of mystic odors wafted. Every faculty and form of Nature is laid under contribution for the expression of the great need of union which surges up through the animal world. Everything is turned

into an indication, a symbol, a token, a message, a call. The faculty is a social one. It is the beginning of the panorama of Art.

It grows and grows as the animal ascends in the scale of evolution, till in Man it rises into the supreme sense of Beauty—that dim inner vision of the unity of all beings, of which I have spoken. Yet, even here, let anyone with keen glance pierce this most perfect flower of emotion as it blossoms in the depth of his mind, and he will perceive the Sexual still beneath; let him study its outward expression in picture-galleries and poems, and under many disguises he will recognise the same old theme. And why not?—since in giving utterance to the sense of Beauty on the plane of intelligence, Art is only expressing again in another form what Sex has said since the beginning of the world? Despite all the follies and misunderstandings which have encircled and beclouded this subject, it remains true—what I have said—that the redemption of it into its true relation to Art is one of the greatest works which await us to-day.

It seems a pity to think that so great a man as Tolstoy cannot see this; that he should be so

completely dominated by the fear of the senses;[1] that he cannot see the blasphemy there is in denying and crippling the human body; that he perceives no alternative to being a slave to passion, except the killing of it dead. He inveighs, not without reason doubtless, against the modern French novelist in whose pages the word "naked" looms so large, and does not see that to *shun* the word or the fact of nakedness is every bit as indecent, as to revel inordinately in it. It is just in the free sane acceptation of nakedness and grossness as of any other fact or facts that salvation lies. It is just in the facing of all these facts of life and Nature, and in a sense rising out of them into another plane in which they are seen equalised, and their true relation to each other is discerned, that that little word (Beauty) comes in—which to Tolstoy, alas! comes in only like a guest with a stranger's face, since to him it has no meaning but sensuality.

We shall not I think go very far wrong if we say that in the free sane acceptation of the human Body, in all its faculties, lies the Master-key to the Art of the future.

[1] As in that strange jumble of real acumen and bad logic, of large-heartedness and fanaticism, *What is Art?*

V.

Tradition, Convention, and the Gods

WE have seen that Art is Expression. The musician portrays to us his feelings. He puts the notes together in a new way, and we hasten to hear him, because he reveals what was dormant within us, and awakens new births in our hearts.

But (and this is the point of the present chapter) he does not always reveal to us feelings originating in himself. In nine cases out of ten, in ninety-nine out of a hundred, the artist merely puts into form again the feelings, the sentiments, which are already public property, and which have been expressed many times already. He flocks with others along a path which has become a beaten track. He voices something certainly, but it is not his own inspiration, his own heart's need; it is simply the average sentiment of the day—something which *was* once

an inspiration to somebody, but has now probably become little more than a formality.

Artistic representation in fact, like Life itself, tends to crystallise along certain lines. Various things, partly ignorance, partly prejudice, partly mere inertia of mind, lead to this result; and these lines soon become customary and traditional. Take for instance the graphic representation of the human body. The modern street *gamin* has his quite conventional way (the way of ignorance) of scrawling its outline, so has—or had—the North American Indian. The figures on Etruscan pottery are more artistic—*i.e.* less formal—than these, but their huge thighs and loins show a decided pre-occupation with one aspect of the subject. Egyptian Art for the most part treats the lower part of the body as a mere formula, but seems to give vitality to the face, and especially to the eye, on which it dwells fondly. Indian religious art again delights to represent its saints and gods seated cross-legged—in sign of their perfect peace of mind; and to pinch in their bellies to the utmost—as a symbol of their spirituality and austerity. The early Italian painters run to flowing lines and limp bodies; the school of Albert Dürer is all for angular strength and

honest gristle; Rubens must have his acres of satiny skin; the signs of Dante Rossetti and his clique are a serpent throat and lips like immense slugs. Every race, nation, coterie has its methods of treating its subjects — its traditions — which become the less artistic as they grow more formal. It is only here and there, in the case of the very greatest works and schools—say the Greek sculpture of the Periclean age, or the Elizabethan drama—that they seem to escape from formula, and to become world-wide in their significance.

Yet it must not be supposed that the mannerisms of the schools are without meaning. One of the great interests of Art is just that historical view of the human mind which it unrolls before us. To go through a picture-gallery, or to study the literature of a race, may not certainly be to gratify the expression of one's own emotions; but it is something perhaps more important; it is to pass backward through the centuries and enter into the thoughts and feelings of thousands who lived before us. Take a group of art-work belonging to any period; think yourself back into it until it ceases to be conventional, and lo! you have got the outlook on life of a whole branch of the human race.

Gaze at the altar-pieces of Giotto and Orcagna and Fra Angelico till the inevitable halos and bended knees and conjoined palms cease to irritate you—till you begin to feel them natural and expressive—and you will have got nearer to the mediæval Church's conception of the Communion of Saints than the creeds and the history-books will ever bring you. Or stay with the ladies of Gainsborough and Reynolds and Romney till you have forgotten all about the Saints, and (in the midst of all its affectations) you will thank the eighteenth century for its pagan sweetness and worldliness and grace. Contrast the Greek drama, so simple and clear in its outlines of human character and yet so awful in its sense of interlocked life and Destiny, with the bustle and movement of the Elizabethan stage and the suggestion of individual initiative which reigns in the latter, and you will realise much of the mental differences of the respective periods —something the same as if you contrast the Greek music and early Gregorian Church tunes with the glees of Dowland and Orlando Gibbons, or the later-developed fugues of Bach.

It would be absurd of course to say that each of these art-schools and conventions gives a complete

mirror of its time; but that each opens a glimpse into the thoughts and feelings of large sections of the contemporary population, we may fairly assume. Take the pictorial art of the times we know, say of the nineteenth century, and it is evident that some such correspondence holds. Certainly there are some schools to-day which are mere eddies and revivals of former schools, corresponding to what is traditional in society at large; but then there are other schools which are almost unprecedented in History. Such for instance are the great modern schools of landscape-painting dating, in Britain, from Gainsborough, through Constable and Turner, or in France through Rousseau and Corot, and corresponding with the fact (which we recognise from other sources) that the modern man sees things in Nature—beauties and a sense of kinship—which have never been felt to like degree before. Such are our great schools of peasant-life and portraiture, from J. F. Millet, Jules Breton, Fredk. Walker, and others onwards, answering to the immense change in the general recognition of the manual worker. And such are the schools, historical and ethnographical, of men like Alma Tadema or Verestchagin, who adopt an almost scientific Realism and illustrate the fact that for the first time in history this age has conceived

the idea of genuinely transporting itself into, and realising, the life of past and distant peoples.

In this case then—of our own time—we see how great schools of Art have arisen, undoubtedly representing modern developments of the human mind; and similarly we may conclude of the schools of the past. However conventional they may now appear to us, they body forth something of the general mind of their time, and are, from that historical point of view, of absorbing interest.

But this process—of the formation of a Convention from an original living Expression, and the drifting of the Convention down history till it loses its vitality, meets us everywhere; not only in so-called Art but in all of life. There were arts in human life existing long before what is commonly called Art—of which this is true. The formation of Language itself, spoken or written, is a notorious instance. The formation of Custom the same. So of all Symbols.

Gerald Massey in his *Natural Genesis* (vol. i. p. 39) points out the curious fact that the dung-beetle became to the whole ancient world of Egypt the symbol of immortality. "The beetle in Egypt, during the Inundation, would have been washed out

of life altogether, but for its Arkite cunning in making ready for the waters by rolling up its little globe, with the seed inside, and burying it in the dry earth until the Inundation subsided. How they must have watched the clever creature at work; no font of letter-type employed in radiating human thought could shed a clearer light on the idea of resurrection from the earth than this living likeness of the process of transformation into the winged world." Thus the living Scarabæus, beginning its career by wakening strange emotions and wonderment in the breasts of primitive men, ultimately became embalmed in the human mind, and passed down through all the centuries of Egyptian civilization as a great religious sign.

Almost all early races seem to have adopted a system of *totems*. Each tribe, each family, the individual even, would select an animal or other object—a beaver, a fox, a lion, a wolf, a rose, a harp, a crescent—for its symbol, to represent some virtue which it admired or claimed: industry, astuteness, valor, swiftness, and so forth. This was a *bonâ fide* effort at artistic expression. "See! I am an Eagle, or a Buffalo"—"I am a knight of the Cross, or the Crescent"—"I belong to the family of the

Grizzlies." But the meaning and origin of the emblems in course of time faded out of sight. They became mere forms, and conventionalised themselves into all the signs of heraldry and the flags of the nations.

And so too have arisen the gods. The god is an advance on the *totem*. There comes a time when an *animal* is not sufficient to express the ideal of the tribe. It must be a man, or a human being—perhaps a highly specialised human being. It is not sufficient now to say "I am one of the Grizzlies," but "I am a follower of Apollo, and one of his company—or a follower of Baal—or of Buddha." We must have a god of War, like Ares or Tiauw —a splendid hero and fighter—to stand for what we admire and would imitate; or a lover of music and dance and drink and mystic madness, like Dionysus; or a child, like Horus or the infant Jesus, to shadow forth the yearnings and tenderness of our hearts. Then there is that lovely Woman-form that mingles in our dreams with all Nature—Aphrodite, whom some call Astarte, who rises from the sea and wears the crescent planet on her brow—to her surely above all our lives are dedicate. And yet there is that other Woman—the deep-bosomed divine Mother—Demeter,

Isis, Mary the Queen of Heaven. Or that god whose symbol is the Lamb—must we not henceforth take him for our flag, since we are now no longer fighters, but are going to conquer the earth by meekness and humility? And yet again there is Heracles: how glorious is strength; sheer manly strength and prowess (not meekness) turned to human service! or Iris, the lovely messenger, whose dwelling is in the rainbow!

It has been said "An honest God's the noblest work of Man." And so it is. The gods rise ever as man's Ideal rises—of which they are the expression. And yet there is something more in it all than the mere *growth* of the type; there is the actual variety and abundance of types represented. How rich is humanity in its gods! *All* the types are needed. Here we have a heritage far beyond the scope of any single deity—the Eternal Soul itself. It would seem as if every faculty and feeling, every thought and passion, of Man was preserved in this splendid Museum.

Look at Siva, two-sexed. Tradition says that once man himself was thus formed. How gracious and lovely (dreams the far-back Indian) if this might be again! Or look at Brahma with a hundred arms and legs, whose fingers and fleetness run through all

creation. Think of Orpheus — how profound, how touching!—drawing all souls to him, whether from the upper or the under worlds, by the magic of his lute—gathering all Nature round him in the bond of harmony. And there is that Adonis the beautiful youth, whom, slain by the wild boar, the maidens weep each year—him we will take for symbol of the Sun, wounded by the tusk of winter in his generative part; for symbol of Good wounded, as it ever is, by Evil.

For there are evil gods, and strange queer gods too; and Typhon, that Northern Dragon, circling round the Pole, from his lair of darkness and cold continually threatens the gracious Lord of Light and Life; and there is Beelzebul, the Prince of Flies and of all Spitefulness; and Kali, terrible (though sometimes gracious) with her necklace of skulls; and that fruitful monster, that Man-Fish, Oannes; and Priapus, most improper of deities; and Pan, whose lusty horns and hoofs glance through all creation—whom the Greeks were not afraid of, but the Christians were, and so made him into their Devil!

Probably, at some time, many or most of these were actual human beings, who by fulfilling to a

great extent in their persons and lives the required character, fired the imaginations of their contemporaries and became centres of the myth-making tendency of mankind. After their deaths, legends gathered round them. The exploits of still earlier heroes were transferred to them; they were clothed upon with time-honored symbols, sexual and astronomical; and ultimately exalted to a place among the stars in heaven, or at any rate in the Valhalla of human worship and remembrance. And in proportion as the memory of the actual man died out, so probably did he rise in importance as a god—but at the same time became more and more conventionalised into an embodiment of just one virtue or quality. Ultimately he became a formula, and as a personality perished, but even then for ages lasted as a symbol, and was worked into the Life of Humanity, and into its Art.

Thus to-day and through the centuries all these signs and symbols enter in—fragments of speech, fragments of gesture, fragments of custom, forms of gods, of totems, forms of human limbs and organs, plants, trees, animals, stars, an endless multitude. Think, not only of the great procession of the gods, of which we have spoken—of Isis

floating in her moon-shaped boat, of Athene springing from the brain of Zeus, of Balder slain by the Mistletoe dart, of Jehovah dwelling in the incense-cloud, of the Virgin Mary or the dove-like Ghost—and of the part these have played in the life of the nations; but think for a moment of the value of the Christian Cross or the Indian Lingam as religious signs; think of the *fleur-de-lys*, the *crux ansata*, the *caduceus* of Mercury, or of the acanthus leaf, the wave-scroll, the horse-shoe, and all the subterranean remote emotions which they awaken. Think of the Unicorn, that curious symbol of retirement from the world, and of chastity; or of the Dove; or of the Pelican, placed by the early church (as in Dante and Thomas Aquinas) for an emblem of Christ; or of the Phœnix; or of the Fish, whose scales and head are so often represented in Assyrian sculptures as clothing the backs of the priests, and whose open mouth projecting above is supposed to be the origin of our Bishop's Mitre. Think of the Palm and the Cypress, and all the plants and flowers that have been worked in. Think of all the ceremonials and symbols of daily life—with their half-lost meanings—the marriage ring, the burning of candles by the dead, the

shroud, and nodding plumes of the hearse; the shaking of hands, the doffing of hat or shoes, the grace before meat; the attitudes of the body, the bowing or shaking of the head, the shrugging of shoulders, lifting of eyebrows, and so on without end; and it will be seen that Life itself, the life of Humanity, is and always has been a great effort towards artistic expression—an Art in fact, clouded no doubt and continually befogged by mere Habit and Custom, but giving us glimpses in between, and aerial effects, as of a wide and wonderful panorama.

It is Tradition then which hands down this great expressional effort of the human race. And in doing so it is of priceless value to the artist. For by means of it, and the conventions which it enfolds, he can make a simple sign do duty for a whole series, and carry with it long trains of association.

Yet there is a danger in relying too much on it—a danger similar to that of painting in fading colors. For since Traditions and Conventions are so constantly dying down, and since they are utterly different in different races and nations, their use is necessarily so far limited. The Indian artist who has embodied his most intense religious emotion

in the conventional figure of Brahma with multitudinous limbs, finds that he wakes no response whatever in the breast of the Catholic peasant who kisses the feet of the Crucifix in an ecstasy of gratitude. Another age, another clime, has altered the religious alphabet, and the word spoken here is meaningless there. So it comes about that one of the most important questions which every Artist has to face is his treatment of the existing conventions of his time.

It seems to me (and it would appear from what has been said before) that the only way in which an artist can make his work durable and great is by seeking to arrive at the most direct expression of something actually felt by himself as a part of his own, and so part of all human experience. He must go to the root of all Art, namely the conveyance of an emotion or impression with the utmost force and directness from himself to another person. To do this he may make use of conventions truly; but he must dominate them, transform them, volatilise them; must never allow himself to be ruled by them. Of the two processes which are distinguishable all through the history of Art—(1) the rising of Art out of all convention

into the most direct expression possible of things felt or perceived, and every aspect of life: and (2) its dying down again, its break-up into detached formulas (which floating down the stream of Time become in their turn the material of future art-expressions)—he must identify himself with the first. Expression is continually tending to die, to become external, mechanical, inhuman. He has to overcome this tendency, to conquer it, and continually get back to the living, the direct, the actual, the human. Yet in doing so, let him not altogether break with Tradition, for here he is in touch with that immense field of the Collective Consciousness of the race, which is in fact Religion, and from which the individual—however great his genius—may not stray too far.

And here some slight references to the history of Painting and Sculpture may be of use.

The conflict between the Real and the Ideal reaches back to the beginnings of human life. The pictorial art of all peoples—Bushman, Egyptian, Greek, Saxon, the same—begins with innumerable attempts to depict objects—animals, men, trees, tools, occupations—in a merely imitative way.

The intention is realistic, but the eye is so untrained that it does not really seem to *see* the object. [The power of looking straight at and into an object is one of the latest of human achievements; only after many alternations of the realist and idealist attitudes of the mind is it at length attained.] Some one succeeds in these attempts better than others. His representation (bad though it be) is followed. It becomes a fixed type—the Ideal for the time—the ideal of the human figure, the ideal of a hero, or of a horse, or of a chariot. Then it subsides into a regular Convention. Religion—the great idealising process—comes in and appropriates these results. The hero is conventionalised into a god. He is a Pharaoh among the Egyptians, and three times as tall as anybody else; or he has signs and symbols of his own, like Thoth or Râ, and remains depicted in the same form for thousands of years—no longer mortal, but lifted into the Heaven of Humanity's dreams and imagination. The Common Life—the common ideals and thoughts—so precious, are thus preserved in the religious conventions of their time and invested with an immutable sanctity. But at last the discrepancy between

them and the actual facts, between the god and the real human being, becomes too absurd. The god falls from his pedestal—or at least he is taken down and reconstructed! Humanity, seeking always its own face in the mirror of Nature, corrects its dream to something a little nearer its own likeness.

Let us take the Greek artists and sculptors of the fifth century B.C. They inherited on the one hand a mass of tentative material in the way of representations of the human form and human life—more or less archaic and conventional work, going back to the rudest figures in the street-*gamin* stage of art—as on the old Pelasgic vases, so-called. On the other hand they inherited, from Egyptian and Asian sources, a variety of legends of a mythological or religious character, about the gods and other personages. Apollo charioted the sun, Artemis hunted with the moon at night, Dionysus was the god of wine and revelry, Hermes stood for the swift aerial forces of transmission and interpretation, Oreads and Dryads and Satyrs were vague influences that haunted the woods and streams. Similar abstractions and personifications may be found among any tribe of savages to-day; but they remain as a rule abstract and barren.

It was the great triumph of the Greek sculptors (and poets) that they freed these fixed types and gave them real human life; and yet at the same time (since it is only in the marriage of the Ideal and the Real that the greatest work is conceived) built them into the great Ideal of their religion and national life and mythology. They did not wholly drop the conventional side; they retained as far as possible the vague religious sentiment which tradition shed round these figures; but they tended more and more to give them concrete existence as fully developed human beings. Pheidias and his collaborators released them from all formula and yet preserved around them an indescribable dignity and reserve. The statues, of Zeus in his splendor at Olympia, or of Athene towering majestic in the Parthenon, or the figures of the Parthenon frieze, were the visible presentment of the common life and ideal; but they were at the same time the perfections of actual man and woman. An even more human touch was given by Praxiteles and the later sculptors. Furtwängler[1] says that Pheidias treated Aphrodite as a goddess, but that Praxiteles made her "a mortal woman with human feelings and desires."

[1] *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture*, vol. i. p. 69

And so the process went on. Apollo lost his exclusive identity with the Sun; he descended from his chariot, and became a type of Greek manhood—but a special type of course, the lover of the arts, the genius of light and discernment. Artemis, that severe goddess of the starry skies, became incarnate, as in the statue in the Louvre, in a chaste athletic type of young womanhood, fastening her chiton on her shoulder as she sallies forth to her field-sports; or in a type of womanly purity in love, as in the *Diana discovering Endymion* of the Vatican. Bacchus glorifies good fellowship in undeniably human guise; and the Faun of Praxiteles is no longer a phantom of the woods, but that very loveable half-brother that he seemed to Nathaniel Hawthorne. These figures in fact, in the hands of the Greek artists, ceased to be the religious formulæ of a small nation just emerging from barbarism, and became aureoled types of humanity which will be recognised and loved as long as the human race endures.[1]

[1] Plato in the *Phaedrus* suggests that all men are by nature followers of the different gods—of Zeus or Ares or Hera or Apollo and the rest—and that they love those persons who reveal to them their own particular godhead. "They seek a love who is to be like their god, and when they have found him they themselves imitate their god, and

But as time went on the process went further. For with the natural evolution of the mind, and with the growing influence of Rome, Greek Art gave way more and more towards the practical and actual. The Greek artists, transferred under Roman influence, began to seek their subjects more and more in the outer world; Painting, more flexible and adaptable than Sculpture, took its place; till in the beginning of the Christian Era we meet with a state of affairs something similar to that around us to-day, in the nineteenth century—the old ideals, the old sanctions of life breaking up, Art no longer occupied with Religion and the gods, and the expression of a common Ideal in public functions, or in the temples and their adornments, but branching out into various separate departments, and turning its attention to the representation of human life, under every aspect. Novels of a realistic character swarmed, and the walls of Pompeii and other cities were covered with frescoes innumerable, executed by workmen certainly with a high

persuade their love to do the same, and bring him into harmony with the form and ways of the god as far as they can." Thus, for Plato even, the gods are embodiments of human types; or perhaps we should say actual celestial beings each enfolding and uniting in himself the human spirits belonging to his following.

degree of artistic taste, and representing from a quite individualist standpoint every phase of life—tavern-life, markets, brothels, mechanics' shops, rope-dancers, women playing the lute, landscapes, and all sorts of legendary and romantic matters.

The same went on far into Christian times. [Though early Christianity contained in itself perhaps the germ of a new religion, we must look to other and later influences for the source of what we call Christianity.] The Christian art of the first four centuries remained delightfully pagan.[1] The Saviour was a beardless youth, like a young Greek god; sometimes represented, like Hermes the guardian of the flocks, bearing a ram or lamb round his neck; sometimes as Orpheus tuning his lute among the wild animals.[2] It was not till early in the fifth century that the bearded Christ began to appear.[3] Then a Vandalic moroseness and gloom,

[1] See *History of Painting*, by WOLFMANN and WOERMANN, vol. i.

[2] On a ceiling in one of the chambers of the Catacombs is a painting showing Orpheus with his lute in the centre and four Biblical subjects in surrounding panels—namely, David with his sling, Moses striking water from the rock, Daniel and the lions, and Christ raising Lazarus. David and Daniel are quite nude figures, hellenic in style; and the whole is treated in a graceful and decorative fashion.

[3] It is said that there is no picture of the Crucifixion earlier than the seventh century.

reinforced by Egyptian reverence for Death, descended over religion; the artistic sense died down more and more; ogreish countenances began to frown from the mosaics in the churches. Finally, amid the many conflicting currents and countercurrents of that time, the whole Greek and Roman tradition dwindled away and emptied itself into the rising tide of Gothic and Alexandrian Christianity. The traditions of classic art—except for the slenderest struggling threads—practically perished.

But after an interval the same thing happened again which had happened before. The new gods began to establish themselves. A new birth of architecture, new forms of temples (or churches) and functions and ceremonies, gave a new centre to the Common Life. Charlemagne and Alfred the Great by their social policy consolidated the idea. Gothic architecture, culminating from 1000 to 1300 A.D., gave it a magnificent home. The scattered rude realistic beginnings of pictorial art, among the Irish or the Germans or the Normans or the Saxons (as seen in old wall paintings, or in the Missals and gospel books of the ninth and tenth centuries, or in the Bayeux Tapestry, eleventh century) were

again taken up by Religion, idealised and dedicated to the service of the gods. Mary, Jesus, the Saints, the Almighty, were depicted in a studious and reverent, though of course tentative and puerile way, and with the strictest attention to traditional attitudes and conventional accessories—just as Râ or Isis, or Apollo or Demeter, had been depicted before by the Egyptians or early Greeks—yet with a slowly growing perception of form and proportion. Till at last, with the growth of culture and social freedom, as in the corporate cities of Italy, and with the general expansion of men's minds and the infiltration of classical ideas, the European artists began to rise to quite new conceptions. With the mastery of the art of drawing and the realism of the human figure, that happened, which had happened before in the time of Pheidias. The gods were freed from their bonds, and became glorified men and women, divine and mortal both. The conventions were loosened, and yet retained as far as the kind of halo they brought with them was serviceable. Jesus, though still the Son of God, became a real elder brother to Man; St. Sebastian appeared as a handsome youth who having fallen into the hands of his enemies is yet sustained by

a noble faith in Religion; St. Jerome illustrated the pathos of age in close expectancy of death; the Holy Family identified itself with the human Family; and the Miraculous Conception of the Virgin gave an added glory to the Motherhood of every woman. Finally, as the process went on, the religious side began to die down, the meaning and inspiration of the traditional subjects became more and more lost, till at last we find them serving (as in the case of many of the late Renaissance artists) merely as excuses for the presentment of very commonplace figures or situations.[1]

One of the most interesting moments in the history of European Art is perhaps just at the point where the two tendencies meet—where the growing sentiment for the actual human form and human life naïvely pours itself into the stream of religious tradition—as for example in the Ghent altar-piece of the Van-Eycks, with its naked Adam

[1] As an extreme instance of this may be cited a portrait of the *Eternal Father* by Carlo Dolci (at Florence)—in which the First Person of the Trinity is depicted as a middle-aged beau, with lardy-dardy whiskers and weak expression, leaning with his elbows over the terrestrial globe and carefully displaying a magnificent jewel, which flashes light from his bosom!

and Eve "the first instance for ten centuries of a painting studied direct from the nude,"[1] or in the statues and reliefs of Donatello, or the Christian Madonnas and pagan goddesses of Botticelli. With Raphael already we are leaving the Christian Heaven behind. The loveliness of the Virgin is becoming obscured by the loveliness of the Baker's Daughter. A new ideal is dawning on the world. It is the same with Michel Angelo. He ought perhaps never to have made use of Church themes; for his acute mind saw too completely through them, and he uses them merely as pretexts for studies of the human form, and for indulgence of his love of contortion—that great pitfall of his genius. The Sistine *Judgment* is simply an excursus in Anatomy; and even the *Creation of Adam*, that serenest of his works, is somewhat marred by his unbelief in his own image of God. He is far strongest and most artistic and most himself in the single figures, like the Sibylls and youthful Prophets of the Sistine Chapel, and the David and the Lorenzo de' Medici and the Greek Slave of his sculptured work, where he surrenders himself to his own inspiration (which though not that of the Church certainly contained in itself a

[1] *History of Painting*, WOLFMANN and WOERMANN.

wonderfully grand element of universal religion) and to that other tradition which had come to him across the centuries from Greece.

[If for a moment we take a glimpse of Indian or Egyptian Art we find apparently that much the same processes and evolutions have gone on there, as in the classic or European field. Only in India and Egypt Art being so much more religious has always been *more* conventional, more stereotyped and fixed over centuries and even thousands of years, than in the West. The gods in these countries never become *human*—they remain more or less monsters, symbols, impossible beings with animal heads, or multiplied arms and legs—and therefore never rise to the full stature to which a god may rise, nor to universal interest. And accordingly we find that in these countries the best works of Art are just those cases—mostly of portrait-statues—in which the direct human interest and treatment is strong enough to overpower what is merely formal and traditional. And these cases are of immense importance to us because they preserve in intelligible forms world-old conceptions which we might otherwise miss. Though Buddhism,

for instance, was by no means specially architectural and sculptorial, yet for some reason or other, probably because it was more democratic in its sympathies than the Vedic and Hindoo cults, it was more successful than these in the artistic expression of the most intimate conceptions of the Indian mind. Taking the conventional attitude of the gods—Siva, Brahma and the rest, sitting cross-legged in the act of meditation—but dropping most of the traditional accessories, the Buddhist artists in their images of Buddha gave themselves to the problem of rendering a purely human being whose mind has reached a transcendent state of fathomless peace and contentment, who as it were by virtue of this attainment is divine and human both; and it must be confessed that in some of their best efforts—as in the statue (of the seventh century) at Anurádhapura in Ceylon, or in the case of the temple of Kamakúra in Japan, they are marvellously successful.

While the Indian genius went specially along this line—of the pure abstraction of the human spirit from time and space and the world generally—a line of course very unfavorable to pictorial or statuesque art—the special conception of the

Egyptian genius was the immensity of duration of Time itself and of the human spirit *in* Time. All the religious customs of the Egyptians show this, their ceremonies, their gods, their anxiety about the other world, their ritual of the dead, their mummies, their perennial tombs, their pyramids, their temples. But after all the most convincing and overwhelming expression of this sense occurs not in these traditional religious representations, but in the quite actual portrait-statues of their kings. The way in which — in the great seated statues of Rameses II. or Amenhotep III. — the huge craglike blocks of stone take the great grave outlines of human figures looking out far and away over the Nile waters and the fertile plain to the endless deserts — the way in which out of the rigid conventional attitude and attire the human soul is made to blossom as it were, and carry with it in the wide sweep of eyebrows and the far look of eyes a sense of immense and endless duration, is one of the most wonderful things in Art—and gives to these statues a unique place in human achievement.]

To return to the historical developments in

Europe. The tradition of mediæval Christian Art had its day; and then was transformed by the magic breath of the Renaissance. But presently in its turn the Classicism of the Renaissance degenerated into a formula.[1] The plastic arts (and literature) became full of careful frigidities. In Italy the Carlo Dolcis and Sassoferratos ruled. The strong realistic citizen tradition of the Dutch art of the seventeenth century subsided by the beginning of the eighteenth into the smooth inanities of Van der Werff. Pope and Dryden represented English poetry; and in France, which now came to be the centre of European culture, the example of Corneille and Poussin held sway. Classical dramas, classical pictures, classical poses, ruled everywhere, and bored everybody—till at last with the death of Louis XIV. the Rococo spirit broke upon the scene, and in frivolous guise the figures of ladies and gay cavaliers glided across the stage, full of quips and animation.

[1] One may almost say that with Michel Angelo the *inspiration* of classical and religious art perished. From his time tc that of Millet stretches a long gap, in which there are certainly splendid portraits to be found, but nothing of first-class merit in the ideal treatment of the human figure. This gap is curiously filled, as I have said before, by the art of Pure Music.

True it was a frivolous animation — disporting itself on the edge of the abyss, as it were; but it was better than dry bones. It was some portion of the actual life of the day, and of human life. Then came the Revolution. Rococo was swept away. The Classic tradition reasserted itself for a time in painters like David in France and Raphael Mengs and Carstens in Germany; and then a second reaction in favor of actual life led to what may be called the foundation of modern Art. With Constable in England, with Millet and Corot and Courbet in France, came the inspiration, not of the gods of Greece, not of the Virgin and Saints of Christianity, not of an idle nobility amusing itself in ornamental gardens, not of a smug and comfort-loving *bourgeoisie*, but of the peasant and artisan life and the untrimmed landscape—the closest possible approach to authentic Man and authentic Nature.

These examples may give some slight idea of the place and movement in history of Art-traditions. Beginning with Religion, the expression of the absolute Common Life of the people — in an originally narrow and uncultured form—they tend, on the whole and in the long run. to widen out,

with the successive efforts of individual artists, always towards a freer and more various portrayal of human interest. In Europe, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Art—including Literature and Music—passed from subservience to the Church into dependence on the aristocratic patronage of individuals; in the seventeenth century (in the Netherlands) and in the eighteenth (in England and France) the rise of the *bourgeoisie* gave another complexion to the process. A Public began to be formed. The artist found himself freed from the patronage of the Ecclesiastic, from the patronage of the Noble, but on the condition that he should please the many-headed monster. This gave perhaps a greater range of subjects to Art; but at first, and while the Public was yet small, it increased rather than diminished the difficulties of the Artist. Finally with the nineteenth century it may be said that the latter conquered his own independence. Mozart died in the effort to please the playgoers; Beethoven simply trampled the public and his patrons under foot, and pleased *himself*. And since Beethoven the same course has been open to every artist having the pluck to face a little privation and neglect for the sake of his work.

In all this — notwithstanding, or possibly on account of, the widening range—there might seem to be an inevitable tendency towards disintegration: a tendency for Art to drift *away* from the Common Life, to drift away from any religious function, and to resolve itself into the expression of mere personal feeling and individual caprice. Yet it is possible that the whole process really means much more than this—that it means in the end a return to the religious Synthesis, but on a much grander and more inclusive scale than before; it is possible (as I have partly indicated) to see a counter-current even in Individualism itself—and with this subject I shall deal in the next chapter.

VI.

The Individual Impression

'L'art, mes enfans, c'est d'être absolument soi-même."—P. VERLAINE.

ART, as we have said more than once, must feel before it can speak. However cultured a man may be, however learned in tradition, however skilled in the production of *effects*, he will never have the child-like grace and directness of the true artist unless he *feels*. "A man must be touched himself" says Millet "if he is to touch others; or else his work, however clever, will never have the breath of life, and he will be nothing better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." It is feeling alone which finds the magic pass-word; and if the feeling is not there . . . all the dictionaries and paint-pots in the world will be of no avail.

Tolstoy (in his *What is Art?*) goes even so far as to say that only that is a true work of Art which

transmits "fresh feelings new to mankind," and that an art-product to be genuine must bring "a new feeling into the current of human life." This is something of an exaggeration; for it is possible that an art-product may express a feeling as old as the Pyramids and yet, if the feeling is genuine in the artist, his work too may be genuine. But we may perhaps say that an art-work to be *great and lasting* must embody a new feeling.

And this for a very simple reason. It is only when a man experiences what has not been expressed before (at any rate in his circle and world) that his feeling becomes sufficiently condensed for vigorous and lasting expression. The feelings which have already found channels in the Art, in the Life, of the day, are already weakened and diluted. They may find genuine expression, but still only of a feeble and second-rate character. [That is why it is so easy to turn out a good imitation of work that has been done before—say of a Gavotte by Scarlatti, or a water-color by Turner — and so difficult, perhaps impossible, to produce any great body of performance which shall rival first-rate work, and along the same lines.]

Thus it happens that great and effective Art is

always the product of titanic labors and even sufferings. Here too (as in other cases) the Kingdom of Heaven is taken by Force. Here is a new feeling surging within the man, for which there is no utterance to be found in all the Literature, the Art, the Life, of the day. An Angel has come down from heaven; yet no one says a word about it! The human multitude stares and sees nothing, like a herd of cows chewing the cud. Yet to the artist it is the most real thing in the world. Utterance he must have. He is like a woman in travail till he is delivered. Tradition and Custom of course are against him. They have been framed to express what has been felt before, but what have they to do with anything new? They are like a net close-knit and covering everything. The man is strangled, mad. He cannot move without rending or violating something. Yet the birth within him is sacred, nor is it possible to smother *that*.

Thus there is an everlasting feud between the Individual and the Tradition. For each new feeling must come to light through the Individual first. Nay more, there is something original, authentic, in *every* Individual—that which makes him different from every other in the universe. Only go far

enough, deep enough, into your own nature and you are sure to haul up something which will get you into trouble with the world! The Tradition of the race embodies its Religion, its collective Consciousness and Life, and to challenge that is to be a criminal and an outcast, a madman and an atheist—it is to play the part of Satan and the Titans, whose business it is to continually storm heaven and purify the scandals of Olympus. It is certainly a consolation to think that to be "wicked" *may* be of some use, but that to be "good" means little else than acquiescence with what exists. To be a sheep—is only to be a sheep; but a goat is at least an intelligent and interesting animal.

And this feud between the Individual and the Tradition covers the ground not only of Art but of social affairs. The same needs and emotions which are appealing for expression through the Artist are—perhaps in slightly different form—seeking utterance through other individuals in actual life; and the ideas which are going to dominate the life of an epoch often (as said in the preceding paper) appear in Art simultaneously or beforehand. We have spoken of the Renaissance; but it is impossible to separate the art-work of the fifteenth

and sixteenth centuries from the immense social changes of that time. The Reformation, the new ideas associated with such names as Caxton, Columbus, Galileo, Bruno, Thomas More, Campanella, the vast enlargement of human activities in all directions, are all reflected in the new subjects, the greater range, the deeply changed sentiments of the contemporary poets and painters, compared with the mediævalists. At an earlier time the stream of Egyptian religion through Alexandria, and the worship of the goddess Isis, meeting with the Germanic and Gothic tradition of the dignity and influence of women, resulted in the great series of the Madonnas of the Christian painters—which for centuries expressed and became the symbol of the growing power and sanctity of the woman in social life.

In the seventeenth century after the War of Independence in the Netherlands, and with the establishment there of religious and political freedom, arose the great Dutch schools of painting—in which the actual home-life of the people and the native beauty of the landscape were for the first time in History worthily celebrated; and in which portrait-painting, of free manhood and

womanhood, became such a great art. With Louis XV. and the whipped cream of Court life in France came the Rococo style. Later, at the end of the eighteenth century, we find a reaction back to the classical mode of painting; and this curiously illustrated by the endeavors of the French revolutionaries to establish their new society after Greek and Roman models!

Again, during this very time of the First Revolution we find the new Republican ideas expressing themselves very distinctly in an unexpected direction —in the Art of Music. No one can well refuse to see Beethoven's relation to the social changes of his time—even supposing some of his works, like the third and ninth Symphonies, did not afford direct evidence of this. But even Mozart, in his later days, was infected by the same spirit. It is in fact impossible to listen to his Jupiter Symphony (his last, and composed in 1778) without hearing through it something like the movement of masses of people, and the onward tramp of nations.

The bold treatment by Monteverde (in 1600) of the discord of the dominant seventh constitutes almost an epoch in History. Then for the first time entered into Music the idea of progression, of

the free handling of discords, and of the orderly and logical sequence of harmonies from point to point, on the basis of evolution from, and return to, the keynote. Is it too fanciful to see in this a parallel, or a presentiment, of the modern ideas of Progress and Evolution—which were even then beginning to stir in the life of the actual world of Europe?

These outgrowths, these correspondences of Art and Life are at any period "in the air," and affecting whole masses of people at the same time. But though they are so, they have to manifest themselves through individuals first. And so it is that the individual impetus in Art comes to be of the first importance, and forms in fact the kernel of a man's work—his most intimate personality grafted on and rooted in the Mind of the Age, and yet growing out of and actually in the end transforming it.

"To be absolutely oneself"—and to be oneself through the profoundest sympathy with one's subject—that seems to be the secret. And yet it is a thing so difficult to attain, for the individual grows up amid the traditions and usages of his time—swaddled and swathed, nay, well-nigh smothered

in them—and it is long, long before he comes to his own deliverance, long before he comes to really see hear feel for himself, and to let the aureole of his own spirit (not another's) dwell upon the shadow-forms of outer Nature. Yet in some, in the few, this impetus is so strong that through toils and sufferings, through huge mistakes and elephantine failure, through endless labor and perseverance, and slow detail of adjustment, as of the polishing of lenses and mirrors, the inner splendor is at last brought to shine clear and untampered on the world. Following the lead of some divine unapprehended instinct—the sheer need for expression of something which lies at the root of themselves—neither good nor wicked, moral nor immoral—they produce effects which no calculation could provide.

And how they shine, these great artists, in the sky of History, of Humanity, each in his own nimbus of glory!

> "The Splendours of the Firmament of Time
> May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
> Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
> And Death is a low mist which cannot blot
> The brightness it may veil."

Though they stand grouped in their constellations

yet each adds something of his own to the tradition in which he is imbedded, each one sheds his lustre on a new region of universal Nature, each one imparts a quality, a flavor, whispers a message to the soul, which none else is able to convey.

Think of the cluster of the Greek poets—of Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Pindar, Theocritus, Sappho; or of Plautus, Juvenal, Catullus among the Romans; could words convey more different meanings than these names do?

Or of the great artists of Mediæval and Renaissance Europe—of Giotto, the friend of Dante, or the St. Francis-like Fra Angelico; of Masaccio, with his clear-eyed Greek genius, or of the sturdy-souled truth-loving Dürer with his fantastic Northern imagination; of the careful tender Memlinc; of the far-reaching, far-experienced Titian—a very Goethe among painters; or of his pupil, the indomitable Tintoretto. Of the heaven-scaling Michel Angelo—for whom the human (male) form was the emblem of the highest truth; or of Raphael, all earthly grace and Italian lucidity—lover and glorifier of Woman.

Think of Rembrandt, that royal-human lavish soul, so practical, so material, so fleshly in his

approach to his subjects, and yet so spiritual in penetration: catholic as Shakespeare in his sympathy towards all types, prince of all the race of broad-bottomed Dutchmen. Or again of Hogarth, most quizzically inquisitive of moralists; or of Gainsborough and Reynolds, those twin stars that adorn the eighteenth century—distinguished from each other by so delicate yet so certain a difference.

Think of the wonderful individualities that dart their rays through the music of Europe — the romantic thrill and intensity of the Italian Pergolesi; the broad-foreheaded, large-hearted, simple and grand-outlined work of the German Glück; the vague religious dreaming of Palestrina; the strong handling of interlacing themes—the sense of the interplay of human life and character—in Sebastian Bach; the noble open-air sentiment of Purcell; the endless romance of Schubert; the inspired stage-effects of Wagner.

Or in literature, of the clear kindly native-English genius of Chaucer; of Marlowe; or of Rabelais; or the thin pure piercing ray of Dante; or of Montaigne, so wisely charitable and sceptical, whose lamp from his ramparts of classical lore

shines upon all the superstitions and follies of his age. Or again of Goldsmith or Laurence Sterne. Think, to come nearer our own time, of William Blake, that curious anomaly, that cockney prophet-artist who at the outset of a new era combined in himself the Greek and the Goth and the Hebrew; and then of Heine, in keen, subtle, heart-piercing pathos and satire, in delicate flower-like perfection of form unrivalled. Think of the dreamy afternoon glow—as of summer in an orchard—of Keats; or the clear mild daylight (without sun) of Wordsworth; or of Byron; or of Goethe; or Schiller; or of the jewelled constellation of French writers that gather round the name of Victor Hugo—the keen intellectual perfection of Leconte-de-Lisle (as of a six-rayed star), the tender warmth of Alfred de Musset, the delicate radiance of Théophile Gautier, the humanity of Sully Prudhomme, or the phosphorescent shine of Baudelaire or Verlaine.

May we not say of these, and others who may chance to have risen over our horizon, that (certainly in their best work and as far as they speak from their own hearts) the message of each is absolutely different from that of the rest, and

so far irreplaceable? As Alfred de Musset said of Malibran:—

> "C'est ton âme, Ninette, et ta grandeur naive,
> C'est cette voix du cœur qui seule au cœur arrive,
> *Que nul autre, après toi, ne nous rendra jamais.*"

How sacred, how precious, is the individual! Not in humanity only, but in all her forms, is it not true that Nature is individual to her very finger-tips? In some ways the attempt of modern science to reduce everything to laws, to principles, to uniformity, seems a veritable craze. Every manifestation is absolutely to itself and different from every other, and must remain so. Every oyster has its fads and fancies. How foolish of Kant with his "universal imperative" to introduce this idea of uniformity into morals: "Act so that if everybody acted similarly harmony would result." But they never would or could act similarly, and, good Heavens! what a dull world if they did! The celebrated paradox of Oscar Wilde is at least as near the mark, "A truth ceases to be true when more than one person believes in it."

But while we think that this search of Science for *uniformity* is delusive, it is clear that the

instinct which underlies all this movement, the instinct of Nature's *unity*, is correct enough. The phenomena of the external world are like the leaves of a tree whose branches are hidden in the supersensible. The lines which really unite leaf to leaf are not to be seen on the surface. They run backward into the trunk from which each leaf springs.

With all this variety, this individuality of flavor in the great artists of the world—back of it all, the more one studies them, one cannot help being impressed by the strong sense of their unity: how they root back into one thing—deep down also in ourselves—the human heart. In the gathering together of all their voices, we recognise something profounder, more intimate than all. As de Musset further says:—

> "Ainsi le vaste écho de la voix du génie
> Devient du genre humain l'universelle voix."

Read Kalidása, and you might be reading Shakespeare. The sixteen centuries between the two poets, and all the distance of East from West, are in vain to disguise their fraternity. In whatever race or nation or language a great work may appear,

lo! it is but another petal of the same red rose, a leaf of the old World-tree.[1]

Thus (it appears once again) it is the new *feeling* which comes to a man which is the main thing. We saw in the chapter on "Nature and Realism" that there are three classes of material which the artist can use—that derived from Nature and actual facts, that derived from physiological needs, and that from tradition and convention. But all this is only material, and is of no use till the man comes along

[1] It might sometimes seem as if in the empyrean of Art, Humanity were building itself a home—how shall we express these things—a home beyond the reach of Time. It is a world of human Expression, with which Time has intrinsically nothing to do. One period or place or race truly may be more apt for a certain phase of human expression than another; but all phases and expressions build the total, which is the heart of Man; and all, however seemingly diverse, are really linked and akin—the deeper they go, the more deeply linked. In the unfoldment of this great series of emotions, in their infinite variety, Time no doubt plays its part (but so in the notation and rendering of a musical symphony does time play its part); yet the idea, the message, the feeling, the emotion conveyed by the whole is and remains beyond the reach of Time. All the individual achievements in Art in all periods and places—every note which is truly a result of individual experience—all rooting back and down into the common underlying bases of Humanity, are really organic with each other, and together (and together only) constitute its complete expression. It only needs perhaps for our consciousness to slip through the thin veil of the momentary and ephemeral, in order to perceive this other world of union with our fellows, and our nearness and at-home-ness in every part of it.

who *can* use it; and again the man is no use till he is inspired by feeling. It is in the individual and the feelings of which he is capable, that the secret of power, of style, of everything, lies. In a sense the individual Impression is the highest effect that the artist can aim at. Indeed it is the *only* effect that is granted to mortals—either in Art or in Life—the utterance of one's own authentic sensation. But if it is to be a profound effect, it must be because the sensation expressed is profound, reaching back to the great bases of Humanity, which lie at the root of every individual.

And since every individual is different from every other—represents so to speak a different branch along which mankind is growing—so every authentic impression is different from every other. Let twenty artists paint the same portrait—or the same scene from Nature; and lo! the pictures stare at each other with strange eyes! Here is the Barbizon school in the midst of the Forest of Fontainebleau—Rousseau, Millet, Corot, Diaz, all working side by side—yet how unlike are their renderings! Is it possible that these were the same trees, the same peasants, which they were painting? Yes—we say that they were the same

trees, the same scenes; but we only know what we see ourselves.

This is the complete answer to the idea of an exact Realism. There is no such thing. It is as impossible in Art as it is in Science. Every object, every scene is inexhaustible; the person who contemplates it can only *pick out* for representation what appeals to him. Neither Art nor Science can catalogue the leaves of a tree. The artist who picks out of a scene or situation those aspects which appeal to the general masses of people—especially if they have not been represented in Art before—is usually called a Realist; the artist who picks out and represents the aspects which appeal to himself specially, or to the few, is an Impressionist—though he may not be always called so. But it is clear that there is no strict dividing line. The best portrait gives the inner feeling, the emotion, the soul of the sitter looking out from his eyes; but then it gives only the artist's feeling—through sympathy—of that inner world. It is only an *approach* to the Reality from one side. The best landscape gives the feeling of the scene, but then only approached by the sincere effort of the artist to render it exactly as it impresses *him*. The

greatest artist is one whose point of view is intensely his own, and yet so large and broad that it reaches down and includes the general view. In the best work Impressionism and Realism simply blend and become parts of one whole. They see that each is necessary to the other, and that they have a common object.

In the Individualism which, as we said at the close of last chapter, marks the most modern work—the tendency of each artist simply to *please himself*—there would certainly be a destructive disintegrating force were it not for the fact that the deeper one goes into himself the nearer he must come to the Common Life. It is perfectly true of course that in a lot of the productions of the present day (as of all days)—with their bizarre or grotesque or languid or trivial effects—we do not penetrate deep at all or come near to anything very vital. Such works are only perhaps of importance, as marking an extreme and a turning-point. They are the last decadent twigs of a great tree. But the tree is alive enough, and the relation of each great branch to the parent trunk was never perhaps so clear and authentic as now.

The tendency developed unconsciously in the

great pictorial art of former centuries—notably in the Dutch Art of the seventeenth—to unite a noble Impressionism with a broad Realism—has at last, largely through the example of Manet in France, become the consciously inspiring force of the nineteenth century, and penetrates our modern efforts (as in the work of such men as Mauve or George Clausen, and the very fine sculptured work of Meunier). Literature is pushing in the same direction. The Renaissance painters solved the great problems of the grouping of forms and colors; they painted the gods, the ideal—grand figures, perfect lines and hues, in harmonious repose. Later centuries could add nothing to what they had done in that direction. But the nineteenth century has taken its own line. It has descended into the world—leaving the gods upon their thrones—and drawn peasants and artisans, mudbanks by the mouths of rivers, sandy deserts, human crowds, executions, and railway stations;[1] and then, perceiving that its "Realism" did not necessarily mean limitation to the crudest facts of life—that the Ugly is not the only form of the Beautiful—it has proceeded to paint drawing-rooms, sunflowers,

[1] See MUTHER'S *History of Modern Painting*, vol. iii., Introduction.

fashionable and lovely women, race-horses, parks, fountains, all in the very height of actuality, and with a fidelity of outline almost terrible. For the moment under the rod of "Realism" Art trembled. For where in all this jumble of the actual was the harmony to be found which alone can give the sense of beauty?

One answer was that, having gone out to find its subjects in the outer and actual world, pictorial art could only find its harmonizing principle in that which actually does harmonize the objects of the world—namely in the light and air in which they float and move and have their being. The so-called "Impressionist" school flooded its pictures with light. It dissolved all contradictions in sunshine, or in mist, or in moonbeams, or in lamplight. It represented objects (as they are in a sense) as just the foils and fashioning of the Illumination which bathes them. "Impressionism" filled up the lacuna of "Realism"; it did what the painters of the Renaissance had hardly attempted; it made the all-enclosing harmonies of the atmosphere and the wonder-world of movement the main subjects of its portrayal. It was in fact an advance towards a subtler Realism; and in that sense may be compared

with the movement of Literature towards the portrayal of emotion rather than action; and of Music towards the dependence on "motive" rather than on form and tonality.

But there remains another and broader answer. More than once in History we have seen Art die down into a somewhat aimless realistic portrayal of anything and everything, till in the process it lost its animating spirit, and was only resuscitated again by the advent of a new Religion. A new religious ideal penetrating the confused jumble of modern Realism (and of modern life itself) might give it cohesion and form—a permanent artistic value again; but what is this ideal, and where is it to be found? The question once asked almost answers itself. The decadent art of Egypt might be reanimated by the Hellenic spirit; the Hellenic tradition in its turn might run its course, and then be fertilised afresh by the Germanic ideal. The religious forms of one race have in the past been continually replaced by those of another. But to-day Art is world-wide. There is no new race to overrun and re-inspire us. The Religion of the future must come from the bosom itself of the modern peoples; it must be the recognition by Humanity as a whole of that Common

Life which has really underlain all the various religions of the past; it must be the certainty of the organic unity of mankind, of the brotherhood of all sentient creatures, freeing itself from all local doctrine and prejudice, and expressing itself in any and every available form. The seal and sanction of the Art of the future will be its dedication to the service of this Religion. And once this is clearly understood, then any subject may be taken—any fact or actuality however angular or uncouth; but the intuition, the magic of the artist will convert it into an idealism, into a fragment in fact of Beauty, by the suggestion of its relationship, its consanguinity, its exhalation into the life of the Whole. And whether this suggestion is produced by the method of Impressionism, so-called, or Symbolism, or sheer force of Realism, or by any other "ism" known or unknown, will remain a matter of pure indifference.

The work of the Art of the future is of the grandest kind. Leaving aside the rather feeble decorative tendency of the Burne-Jones' and Leightons and Tademas, and of their congeners in literature and the other branches, as leading to little except mere finish and a sort of vacant



blamelessness, she will perceive that her function consists in something much more real, more positive: that it consists in actually drawing human beings together, revealing to them mutually their own feelings, their own inner life and consciousness, and the sentiment of every object, every event, as it relates itself (through the individual artist) to the great thrilling, palpitating soul of all mankind. For the first time the sense of this great soul is dawning consciously upon us. All life will be worked in—the most lonely, the most complex, the most inaccessible subjects, in order that they may wake response in the few that can understand them; and again the simplest and most universal, and in the simplest forms, in order that their portrayal may make the whole world kin. To make mankind realise their unity, to make them *feel* it, that will be the inspiration and the province of Art.

Science and Art are, as Tolstoy suggests, like two great organs, Lungs and Heart—or should we not say Brain and Heart?—of the New Body of Society; the one should make us *understand* our relation to the Whole, the other should make us feel it And the realisation of this Common Life

is the Religion of the future, of which the artists and science-workers will be priests; but which will penetrate all society and of which all the people will in a sense be interpreters—working to understand the secret of their being, working to express their sense of it—to open the flowers of their myriad hearts to each other, for mutual recognition. Before the great anonymous work and life of the People thus freed, before the myriad products of their loving skill in the sunrise of that new day, all the names and works of the "stars" that have illuminated the art-and-science-world of the past will in a sense fade into insignificance.

Everything in modern Art points in this direction, towards inclusion, towards the acceptation of all points of view—of the grossest material facts, of the most divergent subjects, of the most subtle and far-reaching harmonies. *Nihil humani alienum.* Since the first French Revolution this new idea, a new sense of unity, a new religion, has begun to penetrate mankind. Beethoven, Millet, Whitman, the most powerful personalities, have also shown the widest sympathies, the most absolute acceptation of the world. In a quite broad sense they have been at once the strongest Idealists and the strongest

Realists. The greatest of modern artists, they have darted the rays of their individuality to the farthest limits in all directions, and yet at the same time have sought the most common ground of simple humanity, and are the most universally loved. The human spirit in the nineteenth century has been explored to its depths. Its unity with itself, its unity with Nature, has been achieved and demonstrated. There only remains for Art to penetrate the Life itself of the people and achieve and demonstrate the same unity there.

VII.

Beethoven and his earlier piano Sonatas

"One may say that Beethoven was and remained Sonata-composer; for in the case of by far the most and best of his instrumental works the sonata-form was the woven veil through which he looked into the world of musical sound, or rather through which, emerging from this world, he spoke to us; while other forms, especially those of mixed vocal music, despite his remarkable contributions in them, were still only touched by him, tentatively as it were, and in passing."

RICHARD WAGNER.

WE have spoken of the place and work of the Individual in the history of Art. The old Conventions, Customs, Moralities, come down from the past, overawing mankind with their lofty mien; stalking like great shadows through the galleries of Time; clothed indeed in the very forms of the gods. The individual attacks, deposes, dethrones, them. He is a blasphemer and an atheist. Yet presently the scene changes; the New-comer now is exalted, and in his turn becomes one of the shadow-celestials, while the former figures grow

dim behind his. Thus does Satan, the spirit of denial, lead the way!

Beethoven had this Titanic quality about him. You see it in his face: what wilfulness, what determination, what selfness!—and yet a self that existed only to utter what those prophetic eyes had seen.

Everything conspired in Beethoven to make his utterance authentic, strong, unqualified — like a gushing spring which leaps from the inaccessible depths of the mountain. His solitary habits kept his mind clear from the mud and sediment which the market-place and the forum mistake for thought; his deafness coming on at so early an age (twenty-eight) increased this effect, it left him fancy-free in the world of music; Wagner even mentions the excessive thickness of his skull—ascertained long after his death—as suggesting the special isolation of his brain. From a boy Beethoven was a great reader. He fed his mind in his own way. Unlike the musicians who went before him he could brook no dependence upon condescending nobilities. He was not going to be a Court fool. The man who could rush into the courtyard of his really sincere friend and "patron" Prince Lobkowitz and shout

"Lobkowitz donkey, Lobkowitz donkey," for all the valets and chambermaids to hear; or who could leave his humble lodgings because the over-polite landlord of the house would insist on doffing his hat each time they passed upon the stairs; must have had something of "the devil in him!"[1] In politics, in a quite general way, he evolved radicalism or republicanism as his creed; in religion, though nominally a Catholic, he was quite informal. A pantheist one might perhaps call him, or a mystic after Eckhardt and Tauler. Finally, one may mention, as an indication of the great range and strength of his personality, its exceeding slow growth. While Mozart at the age of twenty-three had written a great number of Operas, Symphonies, Cantatas and Masses—many of them of quite mature character—Beethoven at the same age had little or nothing to show.[2] His first Symphony and his Septett, which he always looked back upon as childish productions, were not written till about the age of twenty-seven; and his first great Symphony (the *Eroica*) not till he was thirty-two.

[1] This was the verdict of Hummel, Vogler, Gelinck, and others when they first heard him improvise, on his arrival at Vienna.

[2] See article, "Beethoven," in GROVE'S *Dictionary of Music.*

Up to Beethoven the history of Music—pure Music—shows a slow steady growth and development of musical form along two or three simple lines. It is like the long slow slope which leads on one side to the summit of a mountain. Hither in the bold sunrise we ascend, and such names as Corelli, Scarlatti, the two Bachs, Händel, Haydn, Glück, Mozart are the great landmarks of the way. The route is clear. The lines of tradition in minuet or gavotte, in fugue-form or sonata-form, shift slowly and continuously round us. With Beethoven the pinnacle is gained; an immense outlook widens on all sides; there is an impression of boundless space: a Vision of other lands, dim, distant, full of wild surmise.

But thenceforth we descend. We have come to the other and more precipitous slope. The mountain breaks away in wild crags and wooded gorges. The calm classical outlines rule no more; they are replaced by forms of fantastic and wonderful beauty, but forms of decadence. Schubert is there, at the entrance of that region, with his exuberant gift of divine melody; Schumann with his intensely literary, modern, pathetic, striving, self-conscious spirit, always a little uncertain and unbalanced;

Mendelssohn and Chopin too, leaning over the gulf of the sentimental—the one in an optimist, the other in the opposite direction; and Brahms, who shows again the grand outline of his predecessor's work, but with an intellectual rather than a prophetic effect. And many others.

Then the whole slope breaks away. Pure Music —founded on the base of the old Tonality, and built up over a stretch of three centuries on the great structural lines which flow from the principle of the keynote—has now fulfilled its work and comes to an end, giving place to Programme and Opera: to the work of Berlioz and Wagner; and to those doubtful hybrid forms in which, as in Tchaikowsky and Grieg, it has been deeply modified by the effort to assimilate programme effects. Music, in fact, returns in latest times to the source from which it originally sprung: to be the handmaid of the voice and of speech, and the auxiliary to Life and dramatic action — instead of an independent Art, bearing witness to its own message in proud isolation.

The change in music which began to take place immediately after Beethoven may perhaps best be expressed by the word *lyrical.* Schumann, Schubert, Chopin, Mendelssohn, are intensely lyrical.

Though they did not refuse the great epic and dramatic forms and traditions, it is always their own individuality, their own feelings, which are being expressed. With the earlier writers, before Beethoven, though the individualities underlying are clear to be detected, yet it is the tradition, the convention, the musical form, that rules. Compare Corelli and Scarlatti; in both we see clearly enough a certain stage of musical tradition, rather rigidly adhered to; it is only with a little trouble that we discern a difference in their individual treatment. The same with the fugue music of Sebastian Bach and Händel; or the sonatas of Haydn and Mozart. But compare Schubert and Schumann, or Mendelssohn and Chopin, and it is the distinctness of their individualities which immediately strikes us; their common elements of musical form are less conspicuous.

In any Art, when the great common tradition begins to break away into the expression of individual fantasy, and when mere *phases* of feeling and *effects* begin to dominate, the period of decadence (so called) may be said to be setting in. It does not follow that such periods may not contain much that is precious and beautiful; for of course it

is just the falling away of the mountain on its precipitous side which gives the picturesque variety of wooded slope and dell and crag and cataract. Nothing can be more picturesque, more appealing, more pathetic, than much of the post-Beethoven music. Yet one feels that when the great bases of common life and tradition are failing, the individual can no more be expected to raise himself to the same heights as when these were firm beneath him.

Beethoven came at the culmination of a long line of musical tradition. He came also at a moment when the foundations of society were breaking away for the preparation of something new. His great strength lay in the fact that he united the old and the new. He was epic and dramatic, and held firmly to the accepted outlines and broad evolution of his art, like the musicians who went before him; he was lyrical, like those who followed, and uttered to the full his own vast individuality. And so (like the greatest artists) he transformed rather than shattered the traditions into which he was born.

Beethoven was always trying to express *himself;* yet not, be it said, so much any little phase of himself or of his feelings, as the total of his life-experience. He was always trying to reach down

and get the fullest deepest utterance of which his subject in hand was capable, and to relate it to the rest of his experience. But being such as he was, and a master-spirit of his age, when he reached into himself for his own expression, he reached to the expression also of others—to the expression of all the thoughts and feelings of that wonderful revolutionary time, seething with the legacy of the past and germinal with the hopes and aspirations of the future. Music came to him, rich already with gathered voices; but he enlarged its language beyond all precedent for the needs of a new humanity.

I propose, in these lights, to run rapidly through the succession of his piano Sonatas and orchestral Symphonies.

Beethoven's works are generally divided into three periods; and with regard to his piano Sonatas, if we except the first three (dedicated to Haydn), this classification, though of course a rough one, may I think be adopted: namely, the first period (1796–1801) in which he is so to speak finding himself; the second period (1802–1814) in which he gives his own special individuality its fullest deepest and most artistic expression; and the third period
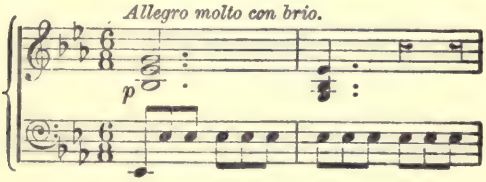
(1814–1827) in which the results of a lifetime are gathered up as it were in a final message to the world.

It would seem better in some ways to except the first three of his published Sonatas (Op. 2), because although there are points of decided originality in them, the obedience to tradition is so strong that they might almost be called Sonatas of pupillage. It is certainly rather astonishing that Beethoven with all his daring independence of mind should have been twenty-five years old when these were published, and yet that he should still write as a most reverent pupil. But it was a sure instinct no doubt with him thus to completely absorb the teaching of Haydn and Mozart before taking his own line. The formalities of Haydn are all there, in that first movement of the first Sonata, in F minor; while the first movement of the third Sonata (C major) is a remarkably correct imitation of Mozart. Still, it must be said that the logic, the force, the compactness of the first-mentioned movement are something more than Haydn ever compassed; while in the



second, in place of the (inimitable) grace of Mozart there rules a somewhat severer graciousness—a kind of simple vigor and cleanness of line, as of a statue by Donatello. One feels in these three Sonatas that the youthful master is putting a great restraint upon himself; but already there are two intensely characteristic and Beethovenish notes which he cannot repress — the wild laughter of the two Scherzos, and the deeply sighing, almost growling resignation of the Largo in Sonata 2.

The Sonata in E flat (Op. 7) is so different



from these, so much larger in its scope, so much freer in its handling, that one can hardly place it in the same class. Beethoven himself calls it "unprecedented"; and so it may fairly be taken as the start-point of his own authentic creations in this line. The first movement has a rush, a flight, all its own; and all noble, harmonious, sustained, well worthy of its author. Technically,

it contains two new features—a little Episode confirming the perfect cadence at the end of the first section, and quite a long Coda (introduced by the same Episode) at the end of the second section. These are features which Beethoven developed to any extent in his later works.

In this first period there are generally included all the Sonatas which follow, up to Op. 28, the so-called "Pastorale." After Op. 7 already mentioned, one of the most characteristic that we come to is that in F major (Op. 10, No. 2) dedicated to the Countess von Browne. Though on a small scale, it is very Beethovenish—with its leonine mane-shaking first movement, its very pathetic and indeed dramatic Allegretto, and droll Presto:



About this Presto a word may be said. Beethoven seldom *indulged* in emotion. He wrote hardly anything which can be called sentimental—nothing which *cloys* with sentiment, as much of Chopin or even of Schubert may be said to do. The only movements against which any such charge may be made are the long growling *Largos* and *Adagios* of his early Sonatas—such as those of the three

dedicated to Haydn, or the *Adagio Molto* and the *Largo e Mesto* of Nos. 1 and 3 dedicated to the Countess von Browne. They express deep depression, despair even, mingled with a kind of religious consolation. How well one can understand their origin in the bitter trials of Beethoven's early maturity, and what a glimpse they give one into the depths of his soul of genius! Yet artistically they are unsatisfactory — long-drawn, monotone, even a little muddy in expression. It is interesting to find that they disappear as time goes on. The *Adagio Cantabile* of the Pathétique, by far the finest and songfulest of them, is also practically the last, unless we except the D minor *Andante* of the "Pastorale," which Sonata written in 1801 belongs to quite the close of the period we are considering.

Beethoven I say seldom *indulged* in emotion; but he often indulged in logic; and this little *Presto* of the Sonata in F (Op. 10) is a striking example. He takes just one strong little motive, and tears it to pieces, turns it inside out, upside down, shows you all the parts, puts it together again, and decks it out as good as new, and better— all for the pure intellectual exercise and the fun

of the thing. It is a reminiscence of the early ways in Music in the seventeenth century; but with a force and fulness all his own. Still it must be admitted that in this respect Beethoven sometimes uses his strength tyrannously, like a giant. He rasps and gnaws his subjects to the bone, and will not leave them as long as there is the least particle more to be got from them. If you try to get the bone from him he roars like a huge lion, and is at it again! Such is his treatment, sometimes with delightfully droll effect, in many of his *finales*, as notably in the last movements of the seventh and eighth Symphonies, in the finale of the "Pastorale" Sonata and in the *Rondo*, Sonata (Op. 31, No. 1)—



sometimes with a sense of thread-bareness and paucity, as in the *Prestissimo*, Sonata (Op. 10, No. 1)—



Just as Michel Angelo's weakness was for the portrayal of muscular science in his figures, so Beethoven's perhaps was for the exhibition of tenacity and sinew and logic in his music. His

music is at times *too* logical, too sinewy, too lean. Talk of economy in Art, was there ever such economy as he shows in that first movement of the fifth Symphony? Just that little threatening fateful motive of four notes, and that other little pleading answer of eight notes, and what a drama is evolved![1] And the same throughout his work. If this severity of outline, this great sparingness of material was at times his weakness, it was also —as so often happens—his strength. It is just this architectural character, this absolutely logical structure, which gives his works such grand contour, and enables them to bear the unprecedented weight of feeling which he puts into them. His intense passion would have broken down a weaker framework. Sometimes when the passion is wanting the framework may seem to obtrude; but on the other hand when the passion is there what force it acquires from its firm backing!

To return to our Sonatas of the first Period. With the opening movement of the C minor Op. 13 (Pathétique) one becomes aware somehow—especially in the two first movements—of another move forward on the part of the composer—of again a

[1] See p. 185 *infra.*

freer handling; of a sense that he is trying to *say* something—something even rather definite. Beethoven eschewed Programme Music[1] in the modern sense, but he tended more and more perhaps as time went on to write under the inspiration of a definite emotion or image. In this Sonata the appealing introduction, and the highly dramatic *Allegro* of the first movement, broken once and again by the same pathetic appeal—together with the name given—all suggest an image in the composer's mind. The *Adagio Cantabile* sustains the same idea. It is so laden with feeling and deep emotion rising into pure sense of beauty and divinity that one hardly thinks of it as music.

To the same period belongs the very interesting Sonata in B flat (Op. 22)—written in 1801. Beethoven himself calls it "well up to the mark." The first movement is remarkable for its closely-reasoned structure throughout, combined with a breadth of treatment and romance which only Beethoven could have
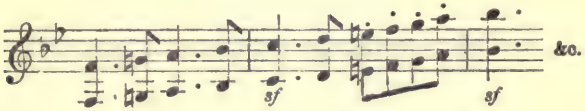


[1] *Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei* (expression of feeling rather than representation of scenes) is what he wrote on his own Pastoral Symphony.

thrown into the old forms; while the *Menuetto* and final *Rondo* are gems of purest lustre. Two out of the many points that distinguish the first movement are the very romantic and expressive portion of the second subject—



consisting for several bars entirely of thirds moving forward by steps of thirds, and the expressive and recitative-like Episode—



which concludes the first section and forms the main material for the "working out" passages which follow.

Beethoven's treatment of this "working out" or "free fantasia" section (the section immediately following the double bar and before the resumption of the main subjects) is always very artistic. It must be remembered that this section comes as a kind of contrast and relief to the more definite

outlines which precede and follow it. Just as in a very common type of melody (say "The Bluebells of Scotland") the whole consists of a main subject twice repeated, followed by a contrasted phrase and then a return to the main subject; so in the Sonata-form of movement, the whole consists of a main section twice repeated, followed by a contrasted section (the working-out) and then a resumption of the main section, in the original key. After the clear outlines of the main section it is necessary that there should be something of indefiniteness in the working-out. Detached phrases are picked up from what has preceded and are woven loosely together, there is much modulation and indecision with regard to key, sometimes fragments of new material are worked in. Beethoven (as in this Sonata) often resorts to the expedient of introducing a new Episode just at the end of the first section, and then utilising this largely as material for his working-out. Thus it has always to be borne in mind by the performer (or performers) that relief and contrast are the main object of these passages. They come like sleep and night, with vague dreams and interlaced reminiscences, after the definite work and bold outlines of the

day. They should not, in general, be rendered too dramatically. As a rule, but not of course always, they fall into long monotones of sound, either soft or loud. Sometimes there is a hush as of twilight over the whole working-out; sometimes it has to be given loudly, but still with a kind of even loudness, like the vague roaring of the sea, when one launches on it from the firm edges of the land. One has only to study the treatment of this section in the Sonata in question (the long continuous passages *ff*, or *pp*, the vagueness of outline, the floating reminiscences of previous ideas, the indecision of key) to see how artistically Beethoven was already handling the sonata-form—on the basis certainly of the methods of Haydn and Mozart but with a vast advance.

In the first period, besides the Sonatas already mentioned, are sometimes included—as far as dates are concerned—the C sharp minor, so-called "Moonlight" Sonata, and the (more justly) so-called "Pastorale," in D major; but as far as regards their sentiment and structure they should be classed with the works of the second period. In the *Presto Agitato* of the first-mentioned, the movement of development begins again—as before in the case

of the "Pathétique"—to take on a freer form. There are points in this movement which certainly assimilate it very markedly to Beethoven's second period—the bold dramatic introductory subject; the long Coda (fifty bars); and the peculiar use—in the Coda—of that climax of *arpeggio* chords of the diminished seventh, of which I have spoken in a former chapter, and which is so characteristic of the composer.

About this last point a few words may be said. There are only three chords of the diminished seventh possible on the piano, thus:—
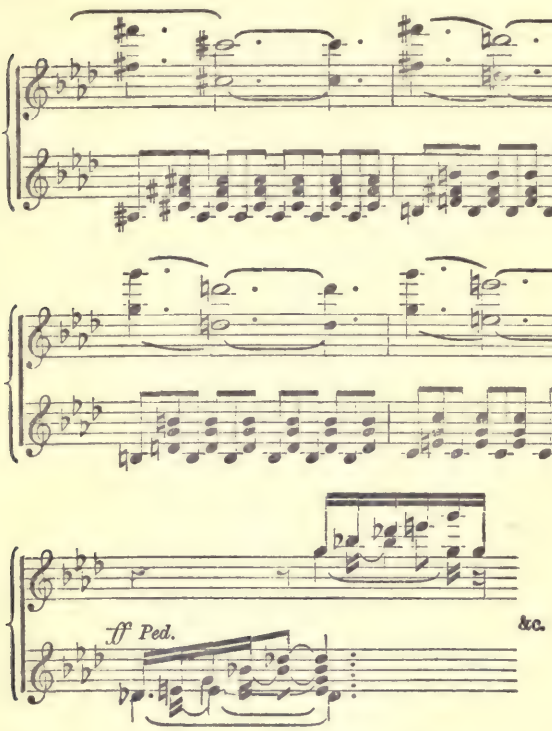


—though by inversion and enharmonic change of notation they may be written in a great variety of ways. They are almost structureless, protoplasmic, protean chords, each one lying outside any key, yet each closely related to all the keys, so that it is easy to pass indifferently from any one of these chords into any one of the twelve scales.[1] We have seen how in the *free fantasia* passages

[1] They are generally treated as chords of the minor ninth with the root left out; but in some ways it is better to preserve the separate name, diminished seventh, for them. Between them they cover all possible notes of the chromatic scale, and form a kind of Trinity underlying the created world of Music.

of his Sonatas Beethoven produces a lulling mesmeric effect by rapid key-changes and consequent indecision of key. He produces a similar mesmeric effect in these and other passages by the use of the chord in question.

Everyone knows the climax in the C sharp minor Sonata. It occurs thirty-eight bars from the end. Phrases of the first and second subjects have been picked up and worked out with rapidly increasing emphasis, till it seems impossible to know where to look for a further development, when suddenly the whole bursts in a shower of these diminished sevenths, arpeggio. The shower lasts for four bars; and then, quite piano and in the bass, the second subject in its full beauty beams forth again. In the F minor Sonata (Appassionata), which we shall come to later on, there is an almost exactly similar passage, perhaps more striking. It is towards the end of the working-out section. The very lovely second subject has been taken *piano* at first and developed with increasing expression and power, till the passion of feeling seems almost more than one can bear; then come four bars (*sempre piu forte*) of a kind of *stretto* in which the tension is manifestly reaching breaking-point—



and then the whole rushes out and away in a white-hot electric stream of the same strange chords, lasting (all *ff* with loud pedal) fot nine bars, after which the movement subsides back to the dominant C which leads to the *reprise*. The effect in both cases is most extraordinary, yet most convincing and

satisfying. It is a kind of orgasm in music; it is the flash of lightning which relieves the over-burdened rain-clouds. Or again it is like the rending of a veil which has long hemmed us in—the revelation of a new world. In a moment of intense excitement we are suddenly carried out of all relation to any one keynote; the tragic burden of the melody, with all its overstrained feeling, rolls off, and we break through into (what shall we say?) a state of Liberation, of boundless Expansion—somehow strangely expressed by this fluid protean chord.

There is something more than music in all this. In those strange climaxes of feeling, sometimes connected with sex, sometimes with religious or other emotions, which occur to everybody, and in which one is suddenly swept beyond all the ordinary relations of life, the individual consciousness appears to be (for a moment!) exchanged for some other and more far-reaching state of being; it would seem that Beethoven—whose emotional nature was of course so profound, so far-reaching—experienced these moments with such a force that he could distinctly portray them in his music. It is just possible he quite consciously did so. There is a curious passage in

one of his letters to Wegeler (quoted by Grove) in which he says "Every day I come nearer to the object which I can feel, though I cannot describe it, and on which alone your Beethoven can exist."

To return to the C sharp minor Sonata, these points, both of technical treatment, and of feeling—the power and breadth and *purity* of expression (no turbidity) combined with deep deep tenderness and passion — would all favor its often-adopted classification among the works of the second period rather than the first.

Altogether in the Sonatas of the first period we see the bursting of the bud, as it were, of Beethoven's genius — the deep pathos as in the *Largos* and *Adagios;* the shaggy lion-like force as in the opening movements of the three Sonatas dedicated to the Countess von Browne; the prophetic insight; the humor, as in the *Scherzos* and *Finales;* the broad Pastoral feeling and love of sunny restful Nature, as in the three movements of Op. 28;—all points which were to be more fully expressed in the expanding blossom of his later work. The only criticisms we can make of this period are—what we have already hinted at—the tendency to a kind of logical bareness in places, and a certain

muddiness or turbidity of expression which may be noticed not only in his slow movements, but in some of the others. This last is an effect which you certainly never find in Mozart's Sonatas; but then it was just the absorption and clarifying of this mud and sediment which gave rise to Beethoven's greatest work. Throughout this first period one sees this clarifying process going on—a master-mind wrestling with itself, wrestling with its means of expression, and gradually attaining as in the "Moonlight" and the "Pastorale" to something like perfect poise and artistic utterance.
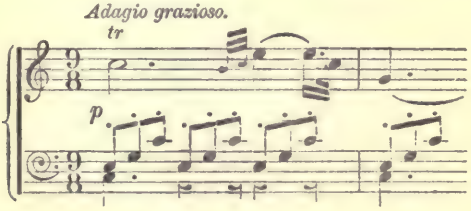
The second period opens with a very impressive Sonata (Op. 31, No. 1, in G major, written in 1802)—



"A change of style," he says of it himself.[1] The first subject of the opening movement consists (as in the case of the C sharp minor Sonata, though to a

[1] "After he had composed his Pf. Sonata in D, Op. 28, Beethoven said to his intimate friend Krumpholz, 'I am but little satisfied with my work hitherto; to-day I will strike out a new path.'"—NOHL'S *Beethoven depicted by his Contemporaries*, p. 48.
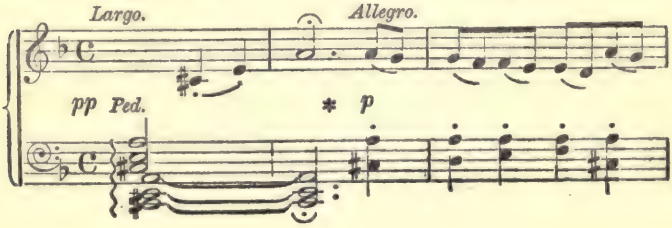
greater degree) of mere short phrases strung together. The characteristic of the movement is its use of these phrases as a foil to the very beautiful second subject, and its extreme insistence on the keynote throughout, though varied by swift alternations in the key of B, major or minor. As an example of the breadth of treatment—which one finds everywhere in the mature work of this great composer—it is to be noticed that in the end of the "working-out" section, the chord of the dominant seventh occupies the whole of thirty-two bars immediately before the *reprise* of the main subjects. The *Adagio grazioso* of this Sonata is profoundly, almost rapturously, peaceful—



A divine element, above all storms, seems at last to have come into Beethoven's life. The opening trill may be compared to a bird song, but that the movement is perhaps more suggestive of a calm summer ocean with the ripple of the sunlight on

it. The depths are certainly there, they are all indicated, the ocean sways throughout; at one time a ground-swell, the fringe of a storm, comes up; but it recedes again; and calm and gratitude and joy prevail. The *Rondo* is vigorous and full of *élan;* but the same mystic sense prevails as in the rest of this Sonata, and the endless repetition of its cradle-song-like subject induces a kind of mesmeric effect. The whole Sonata indeed shows the sense of rhythm—of which Beethoven was such a great master—to the highest degree.

The Sonata immediately following—Op. 31, No. 2, in D minor—is again of the greatest interest; and again as in the "Pathétique" and others it is difficult to resist the impression that the composer is distinctly speaking to us, trying to describe something which he feels. The slow thoughtful *arpeggio* of the introductory bar—the dominant harmony of the key; then the quick descent into D minor—the swift tremulous figure indicating doubt and anxious suspense—
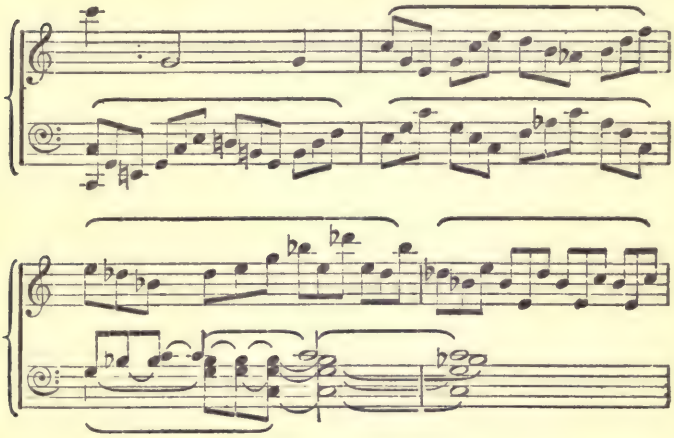


Then the same *arpeggio* in another key, the chord of C—another attitude of thought and deliberation, followed by another figure of doubt and agitation—breaking at last into that deeply passionate expression of love and longing, which may be called the first subject (in D minor). Then more agitation (second subject), followed by a passage of determination and resolution against all obstacles, and then something like calm and good hope down to the double bar—all seems to indicate that a story is being told. So far the movement breaks away largely from the conventions of the Sonata-form; but after the double bar it yields entirely to the needs of expression. Two long recitatives—soliloquies they may be called—of the most plaintive and pathetic character, introduce a very personal tone, and seem about to lead to a sad and despondent close, when a new episode (in F sharp minor), full of rising expectation and gladness, leads to the *reprise*, and the movement ends with a long restful close on the common chord, in which but a distant echo is heard of all the previous tumult. Hardly might it be imagined that the Sonata-form of Haydn and Mozart could be adapted to so dramatic an expression.

The second movement—though in the rather long *Adagio* form belonging to Beethoven's first period—differs entirely from the work of that period both in sentiment and artistic treatment. The feeling has that sense of sublime peace and calm, even of joy, reached through suffering — which is so characteristic of much of Beethoven's later composition—and which seems to throw light backwards on all the gloom and becloudedness of his earlier days. The artistic treatment, with its sportive grace and embroidery, has that effect (how shall I express it?) of *hardly touching the ground*, that infinite lightness and cleanliness, which is found in the very best work, and which characterises much of Beethoven's second and third periods. There are lines in poetry which, as you read them, roll up as it were, like the wind over the grass or a cloud racing through the blue sky, leaving not a stain behind—not a single needless word or letter, no trail of thought or feeling which is not part of the expression and carried forward with it. There are pages in music of the same character. Mozart has this exquisite light touch; but his perfection is often rather a cheap perfection. The voluminous weighty character of Beethoven's thought and

temperament would perhaps hardly lead one to expect a similar attainment from him. And indeed it is true that in his deficient passages he is often somewhat elephantine in movement. But there are instances where he treats the very weightiest subjects with a divine aerial lightness incomparable —as for instance in the opening movement of the A flat Sonata Op. 110, and in the concluding Arietta with variations of his last Sonata Op. 111—of both of which I must speak later.

With the Waldstein Sonata one feels that one has reached the maturity of Beethoven's genius. The immense mountainous outline, the grandeur and volume, combined with loving detail, and with absolute quietude and simplicity, of the whole Sonata, are beyond all praise. No simile is adequate to the first movement except that of a great mountain whose height reaches to the stars, whose sides are haunted by storms and clouds and endless detail of moving sunlight, but whose base rests unmoved for ever. The absolute repose that one feels in every bar of this intensely energetic movement is one of the most wonderful things in Music. It is interesting to notice here again, as an example of Beethoven's Mysticism, that in the middle of the

"working-out" section there is a long passage (twenty-four bars, mainly in triplets for both hands)—
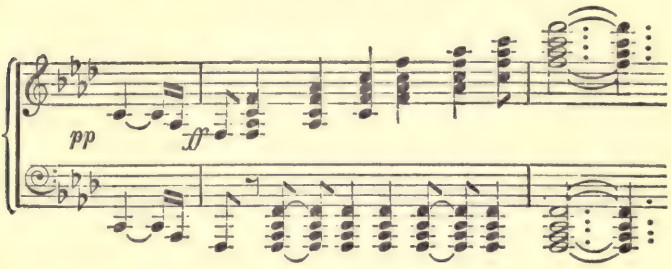


in which the same phrases rapidly pass through nine or ten different keys *without a single mark of expression all the time.* Listening to it the breath is almost suspended; the foothold on earth is almost lost—it is a region of intense but energetic calm, evidently near the summit! Similar passages may easily be found, scattered through his works, and it is interesting to compare them with each other. In the finale of the seventh Symphony towards the end there is a strange one, very mesmeric, in which

the same figure is repeated (*sempre f*) in various keys for some forty bars while the bass creeps sinuously downward by semitones till it settles on a kind of moving pedal on the low E. The effect is weird, blinding, almost awful, and it leads to one of the most tremendous climaxes (marked *fff*) in all Beethoven's music.[1]

The F minor Sonata ("Appassionata") and the "Waldstein," stand like two great companions, alike and yet so different, dominating the whole of the second period. If the Waldstein is a mountain in its solidity and firmness of outline, the Appassionata is like the sea or the sky for its surge and flux of emotion and passion beyond anything ever conceived before in piano-music. What a query is that with which it opens!—the descending chord of F minor, dropped like a plummet into the unfathomable; then the tentative ascent along the same chord, and finish on a half-close on C. Then the repetition of the same phrases in the key of G flat major—the whole reminding one (with its effects of deliberation, suspense and agitation) of the opening of the D minor Sonata. Then when the

[1] Of this climax Berlioz (*Voyage Musical*) says, "La Coda amenée par cette pédale menaçante, est d'un éclat extraordinaire.'

query in F minor recurs *pp*, the extraordinary burst of fortissimo chords, triplet fashion, which follows—



This is one of those outbursts which are so characteristic of Beethoven. Yet it is rarely properly understood or rendered. There are two things to be noticed about it. First, the triplet arrangement which, by causing the accent to fall alternately in the right and left hand baffles the ear with respect to the beats of the bar. This baffling is a very common and of course perfectly intentional effect. Just as Beethoven baffles our sense of Tonality sometimes by passing rapidly from key to key, or by his use of the indeterminate chord of the diminished seventh, and so gets beyond Tonality; just as he gets a new effect of expression sometimes by keeping the tone perfectly flat and without expression marks; so sometimes he deliberately

blurs the sense of Time in order to get beyond Time. His genius could rest well enough within bars and limits when necessary, but it also deliberately passed them all when *that* was necessary. This is one of those passages in which he escapes from the laws of Time.

The second thing to note is that this is also one of those passages that are perfectly flat and without nuance, all *fortissimo*, without a suggestion of anything to the contrary. And this also is perfectly deliberate. The passage is one great Roar outside of Time and the proprieties. The executant who tries to bring it within bounds by carefully showing or exposing the triplet structure, or who shades it off (as some do) by introducing nuances—beginning *ff* and ending *pp* or *vice versa*, and so forth—is simply making a fool of himself. Beethoven meant to roar, and he has indicated what he meant as plainly as he could.

After the roar he goes on with the same deliberative phrases as before; twice more they are broken by similar outbursts and then we settle down to business. One of the striking features of this movement is the way in which the whole compass of the piano is kept in operation throughout. Out

of the simple common chord steps of the introductory subject, a second subject (but in the major) is by a slight modification constructed; and these two, like great waves, surge continually from bass to treble, from treble to bass. There is a feeling of profound emotion in this and the alternation from major to minor, from minor to major—not exactly sad, sometimes even joyous, but full of the deepest experience and sympathy. "If I climb up into heaven thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also." But it is the great human heart of the composer this time that has taken the wings of the morning to greet us, and made a home for us in the uttermost parts of the sea. No more passionate and wonderful message of all-enclosing love and experience has perhaps been given (to those who have ears to hear) than this piece of music.

It was written in 1806 at the country-house of Count Brunswick, to whose sister Therèse he was at this time engaged; nor can there be any doubt of what was the underlying inspiration of this, and of the lovely fourth Symphony written about the same time.

The first movement in its construction passes the usual bounds and formalities. There is no repeat

at the double bar, but the forward development is continuous. After the double bar the introductory subject is developed at length, then the second subject is developed and rushes to the climax of which we have already spoken; then we relapse into key again, and the recitation of the original subjects recommences; but instead of coming to a close, subjects one and two are again taken up, and lead to a second climax something like the first, but longer, after which a Coda, again on the same themes, brings the movement to an end. Throughout, the baffling of the Time by the special arrangement of the triplets[1]—especially in the accompaniment to the main theme—is very noticeable. Yet, notwithstanding all this blurring of key and time, and the apparent formlessness of construction, the handling of the themes and the way in which the movement grows out of the first three notes, make the whole as logical and coherent as any work of art that exists.

The *Andante con moto* of the F minor—like the *Adagio* of the D minor—is one of those exquisitely peaceful yet deeply sympathetic airs with variations, which begin now in Beethoven's Sonatas to take

[1] See quotation, page 160.

the place of the deeply burdened *Largos* and *Adagios* of earlier days. It comes like a belt of calm after the surging emotionality of the first movement, and before the rush of the final *Allegro.* The *Allegro* itself is unlike anything that Beethoven or any other composer ever wrote. Intensely wild, energetic, fantastic, yet profound, it is like a reminiscence of the first movement, a kind of single wave struck from that great ocean, towering in spray, rushing onward, studied for itself alone.

The next Sonata, Op. 78, in F sharp, is dedicated to the same Therèse von Brunswick, and Beethoven himself thought very highly of it. Finally, the Sonata in E flat, Das Lebewohl, written on the simple occasion of the Archduke Rodolph's absence on a journey, brings us to the end of the second period. There is an exquisite freedom and expressiveness about this Sonata; but the strong dramatic and recitative effects, assimilate it to the Sonatas of the third and last period.

VIII.

Beethoven: his later Sonatas and his Symphonies

"'To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise'—Who has not caught this word of Redemption, when hearkening to the Pastoral Symphony."
RICHARD WAGNER.
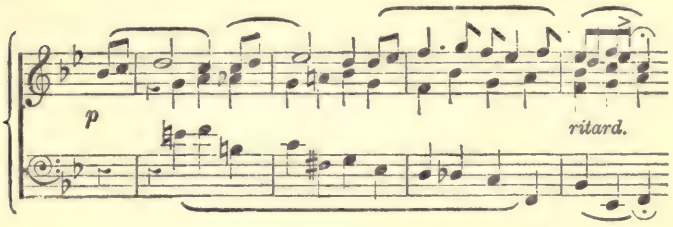
THE third period of Beethoven's work may be dated from about 1814 to the end (1827). If we look at the five or six last piano Sonatas, and compare them with the preceding ones, we notice certain changes. Technically, we find a yet greater freedom of handling than before: all rules of the Sonata-form are made subservient to *expression.*[1]

[1] That Beethoven more than any other composer tries definitely to express definite feeling is shown among other things by the remarkable way he worked his themes up in his Sketch-books (over and over again from the most tentative beginnings). Considering that his improvisation showed boundless wealth of ideas, it is evident that this slow tentative method did not arise from poverty of material, but from the determination to fit his music exactly to his feeling. Mozart might care to create a lovely tune; Beethoven's first need was to say what he had to say.
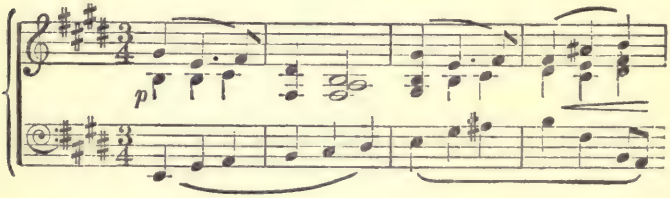
At the same time the general structure is drawn together and more closely knit, movement links to movement, and the whole Sonata is more one piece than ever. Again, and among other points, the simplicity of his melodies and motives seems to increase; also the tendency to the use of variations on a very free basis, and to the adoption of the fugue-form. Simultaneously with these technical changes there is a change in spirit. The great emotionality, the tragic tension, the intense personal feeling and sense of conflict with destiny, of his earlier works, are passing away. The comic extravagant outbursts of the Scherzos, and the sad lamentation of the Adagios are much less marked. Instead, two strains appear; the one, the sweetest most tender and rapturous ever heard; the other a more intellectual and dramatic strain.

Surely if ever after the tragic mortal strife of nearly a lifetime, after deafness, illness, loneliness, poverty, human being ever attained to see the heavens open, to *feel* them open in his heart, it was Beethoven. If ever joy and even rapture reached through and in despite of suffering, and as the final result of all experience, was expressed in words or sounds, it has been expressed in the great

opening subject of the B flat (Hammer-clavier) Sonata—



Op. 106; in the unearthly *Scherzo* of the same Sonata; in the *Andante molto Cantabile* of the E major Sonata—
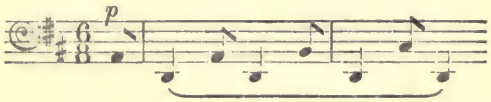


Op. 109; in the opening movement of Op. 110 (A flat); and in the *Arietta* in C major, with variations, which closes the whole series. These things are a priceless legacy to humanity—a legacy which must make it richer for all time in the knowledge of what the human heart contains.

The Scherzo of Op. 106 is very interesting. As I have said, the comic (sometimes bitter-comic)

extravagance of Beethoven's earlier Scherzos passes away in the third period. This Scherzo in B flat is not comic—but rather cosmic; it is full of a strange wild joy and beauty, the freakishness of a god in the dawn of the world. It has a virgin sense of freshness—the very dew of morning upon it. The motive indeed bears a strange likeness to the crowing of a cock
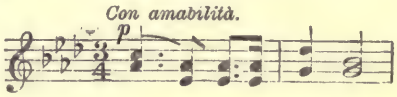


(just as another motive of his—in the finale of the "Pastorale" Sonata—
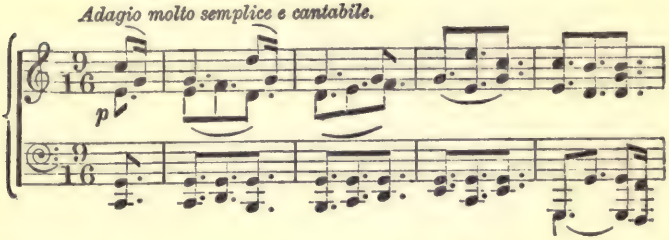


has a queer resemblance to the bray of a donkey)! But what a clarion-call is the former! It rings through creation. It is the birth-song of a soul. Not indeed of a soul vacant of former experience; but of one that comes clothed in the garments of mortality to leave them behind at the gate of Paradise. I can only compare this Scherzo, which indeed ought to have been written for orchestra, with that (on a vaster scale) of the ninth Symphony—of which more presently.

I have spoken of the style of the first movement of Sonata Op. 110 before—its aerial lightness and artistic grace. Here again we have in the opening chords one of those subjects of profound pity and redemption, worked out in the very consummation of Beethoven's art—



How absolutely simple are the two opening subjects, indicated in the first twelve bars, as well as the eight bars of *arpeggio* chords which follow—and yet what infinite suggestion, tenderness, grace! The movement abandons all formalities; the Sonata-form has disappeared. Indeed the whole Sonata shows the complete subordination of form to the needs of expression. The swift *Allegro;* its slow mergence into *Adagio;* the recitative passages; the *Arioso dolente* with its Christ-like pity; its alternations with the sturdy resolve of the *Fugue* and its inversion; and then the extraordinary tumult of joy into which the Fugue breaks and which closes the Sonata—all carry us completely beyond formalities and rules into the presence of the composer himself, who is speaking to us as clearly as man can in a world beyond the reach of words.

The *Arietta* of the last Sonata is a fitting conclusion to this wonderful series of works—



Couched in the very normal foundational key of C major; pitched rather low in the scale; and composed of the very simplest chords and chord-successions; it is itself like a return to the keynote after the long and varied symphony of life. It is the expression of the most absolute repose imaginable. It is gratitude and rest far down in the deeps of existence—only broken by such gentle heave and sway of feeling as may suffice to keep alive the consciousness of that which is steadfast beneath. It breaks slowly and deliberately, like the unfolding of a child's face, like the carol of a lark, like the sunlight on the sea, into a wealth of lovely variations, never pausing, onward continuously gliding. The song of rest rises to a song of joy, even ecstasy. But the foundation

remains steadfast. There is no change in the basic harmonies, and—except for a short passage of a few bars—no change in key. Tonic and dominant (with their related minor) sway slowly and steadily throughout this long swan-song to its glad and even triumphant conclusion.

For the rest the works of this period show, as I have said, a strong intellectual phase. There are, among the five or six Sonatas, three rather strict fugues—whereas in the mass of his former Sonatas there is not a single movement in complete fugue-form; and in the handling of his other movements in these Sonatas (as in the *Vivace alla Marcia* of Op. 101, in the first movement of Op. 106, in the *Prestissimo* of the E major Sonata, and in the Variations which follow) there is more tendency to counterpoint and intellectual analysis than one finds in the earlier works. Nevertheless the treatment of these last Sonatas—fugues and all—is for the most part highly dramatic; the composer projects himself beyond his own joys and griefs; and one may perhaps think that notwithstanding the trying (and almost absurd) complications which beset him at this time, the lawsuits, and vexations and physical hindrances which shattered the outer frame

of his social life and forbade all expression of himself in that field, he was really more at peace within and could turn his attention with freer mind to the completion of his real message, than ever before. Dannreuther[1] (quoted by Grove) says of his later work that in it "he passes beyond the horizon of a mere singer and poet, and touches upon the domain of the seer and the prophet; where, in unison with all genuine mystics and ethical teachers, he delivers a message of religious love and resignation, identification with the sufferings of all living creatures, deprecation of self, negation of personality, release from the world." This is going rather too far. It is a little difficult to imagine Beethoven deprecating himself! and certainly it is one of the great charms of his work that he never negates his own personality. But one can see what Dannreuther means, and the general truth of his interpretation; and no one can follow Beethoven's later works without feeling the unearthly prophetic message which they convey. The whole series of the thirty-two Sonatas shows to those who can read it, that most rare and fascinating of revelations —the inner life and development of one who has

[1] *Macmillan's Magazine*, July, 1876.

influenced mankind, and will influence, to the farthest time, and to its very heart of hearts.

To illustrate the passage from the lyrical phase of his earlier periods, in which Beethoven expressed chiefly his own dominant emotions, the tragedies and laughter of his own life, and fought his way through them, to the dramatic phase, in which he more deliberately portrays his conclusions and the total results of his own experience—we may compare with each other his fifth and ninth Symphonies.

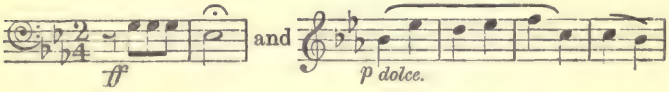
There is a singular likeness between these two symphonies, in their intention, and their dominant ideas and construction; yet there is this great difference. The first, you feel is autobiographical.[1] It describes more or less a phase of experience through which Beethoven was passing or had just passed; the other is more dramatic. It describes a similar phase of experience from a more impersonal point of view, from the point of view of one who looked back on it from a distance, who overlooked it from a high point of vantage.

The fifth Symphony was written during the years 1805–1808—a period of frightful storm and

[1] "C'est sa pensée intime qu'il y va développer," says Berlioz.

stress to Beethoven. His attachment to the young Countess Therèse of Brunswick, though it filled his life, and inspired those two great poems—the fourth Symphony and the "Appassionata" Sonata—may well have seemed hopeless. His deafness, his position, everything was against him. Then came his secret engagement to her in 1806; and then the scruples, the doubts, the outside interference which ended in his withdrawal in 1810. One may imagine what a time it must have been.
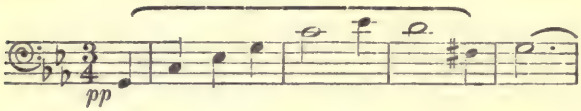
The Symphony is to the last degree tragic. No greater contrast could be imagined than that between the four knocks of Destiny with which it opens—



the pleading human cry which forms the second Subject. But the human goes under; Destiny rages with a kind of inexorable logic to the very close of the first movement. The second movement (*Andante con moto*) is simply resigned, sad.[1]

[1] "Ergebung und Trost," says Otto Neitzel in his excellent pamphlet on Beethoven's Symphonies.

There are one or two outbursts; but resistance is apparently abandoned: in all the cadences a kind of slow hesitating acceptance of fate is heard. Then, with the so-called Scherzo, comes *pianissimo*, a wonderful message—



It is like "the horns of Elfland faintly blowing"—a lightest whisper of dawn from far lands. It blows and soughs across with mysterious effects, and interludes, dies away and rises again with gathering volume till at last it bursts in the triumphant finale.

One cannot resist the general impression that in this Symphony, as I have said, the composer is imaging forth in some degree his own experiences—his own tragic conflict with destiny, his resignation; and then a distant hope dawning somewhere beyond and leading to gladness and victory after all.[1] In
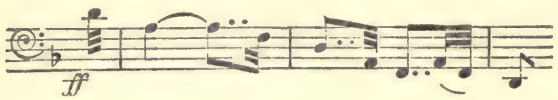
[1] "The C minor Symphony attracts us as one of those rarer conceptions of the Master, in which passionate suffering, as the first note, raises itself gradually through the scale of consolation and exaltation, to the outbreak of joy in the consciousness of Victory."—WAGNER'S *Beethoven.*

the Ninth Symphony the general outline is the same; but the interest here lies in the fact that it is Man—not the composer—who is face to face with the sphinx-problems of life: and the Symphony is the solution of these problems not for one but for all the world.
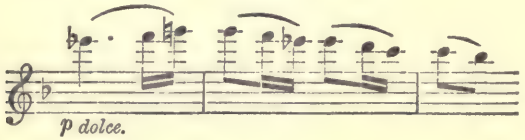
The first movement is very tragic; indeed it is truly awful in parts. It may be foolish to attempt to indicate by words the illimitable meanings of Art; yet here, as in so much of Beethoven's music, it is impossible to resist some very definite associations. For myself, I never hear this movement without feeling in some obscure way that it portrays the doubt, the anguish, the great terror even, that the riddle of the world and life inspires. The movement has tender, sweet, and even hopeful passages; but strife and anguish predominate. Wagner says, "It puts the Idea of the world before us in its most terrible light."

There is something awful and threatening in the descending fifths of the introduction—(which may be compared with the descending thirds in the C minor); and the indecision of key (as to major or minor) only serves to increase the sense of doubt and alarm. These introductory bars culminate in

the very definite phrase, given by the whole orchestra—definitely minor, and very decisively threatening in character—of descent through two octaves down the steps of the common chord—
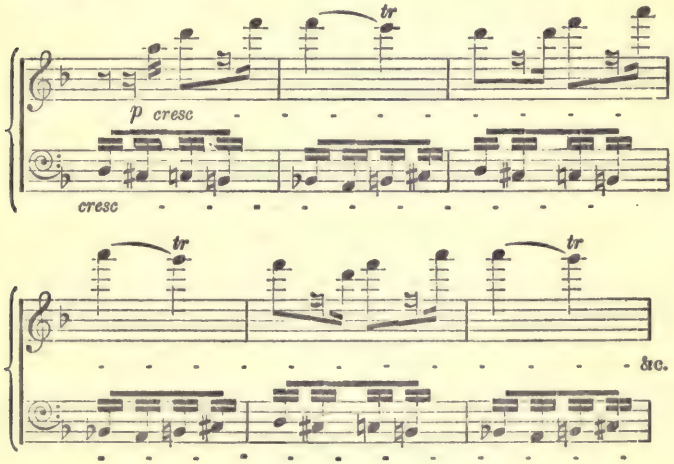


This and the little figure which follows it form, with endless change and development, the main subject of the movement. As in the first movement of the C minor Symphony, so here a surging torrent-like effect is produced, a restless onward rush, unstayed and unstayable. It is like the relentless march of Time and physical Change—the laws of brute Matter, before which mortal man shrinks in dismay. A pleading voice is heard (the second subject, in B flat)—



similar in feeling to that which we hear in the C minor; there are passages of momentary confidence, of hope, even of gaiety. But the great

heartless world-motive rushes on. In the long Coda it becomes more accentuated. The other voices struggle with it in vain. Then in the last thirty-five bars an effect, almost of agony, is produced. The bass keeps falling away by semitones from a kind of pedal D. It seems as if the very ground of existence were giving way. Over this is wrought a new figure—the most pathetic pleading heart-rending cry imaginable—



and then with a final uproar the ruling subject asserts its decisive triumph.

[1] "The peroration contains tones which agitate the soul to its depths. It is difficult to hear anything more profoundly tragic."—BERLIOZ.

Whatever various interpretations may be put on this *Allegro*, no one can fail to feel its restlessness, its strife, its pathos, and, in passages, its heart-rending despair.

But if the first movement represents the everlasting strife of the elements (and man in the midst thereof), the second movement, the *Molto Vivace*,[1] may well suggest the endless grace and beauty of Nature. The subject is said to have been suggested to Beethoven by stepping out into a starlight night. It might well be called a dance of suns and stars—so brilliant is it, so vast, so simple, in a kind of monotonous endlessness, so exquisitely beautiful in form. The drums and the horns give I know not what air of magic and distance; a mysterious wind rushes through; the background of night spreads behind. The exquisite daintiness and lightness of touch, combined with such strange deep meanings, make this one of the most wonderful of Beethoven's creations. There is no strife; all is harmony and beauty. Yet here again a great sadness makes itself felt. It is the sadness of human loneliness—the sense which is sometimes so terribly enhanced by the very sight of Nature's careless perfection. The

[1] Or *Scherzo*, as it is sometimes called.

ripple of the starry ocean goes on, but man sinks to nothing before it, and human sympathy is nowhere to be found.

As if to compensate for this want, and to touch a completely different side of experience, the next movement presents us with the two most human, most loving themes imaginable—the one the more pathetic and full-hearted, the other gayer, but equally true and tender—the one in B flat major, the other in D major. As one listens to the alternating dialogue of these two melodies, it is impossible to resist the image of two lovers conversing, two human hearts, contrasted yet sympathetic, twining with each other in sweetest intimacy. The movement glides on through delicious confidences, and lingers with a kind of lazy grace over its own beauty. Yet here too, strangely enough, it ends in sadness. The coda contains passages of deep dejection and unsatisfied expression.

It would almost seem as if the composer had meant to say, in these three movements, "Not in the strife of the world and of life; not in the contemplation of the pure beauty of Nature; not even in the luxury of love, two together apart from the world, is rest to be found."

A violent discord and uproar breaks into the close of the last-mentioned movement. The whole scene changes, as it were, and all is bustle and excitement. The 'cellos and basses strike up with a fine recitative (to prepare the ear for the voices which are to follow). There is something practical in their demand. Then follow the notorious passages in which the introductory bars of the three first movements are successively recited. After each recital the recitative breaks in again; there is much headshaking, and each of the first subjects is in turn rejected, though it is noticeable that the third is only rejected with reluctance. At last the subject of the "Ode to Joy" is given. It is heartily accepted by the whole orchestra, and the final movement begins.

But Beethoven has yet to actually introduce the voices; and it must be said that he effects this difficult transition with great skill. The orchestra first dwells for a time on the final subject, working it out in some detail. Then its performance is dismissed by the same violent discord and uproar as before; and the recitative—this time the bass voice—breaks in, saying, "Not to these tones, O friends, but to sweeter and more joyful ones, let

us attune our voices." The way is now open, and the whole chorus, supported by the orchestra, takes up Schiller's Ode.

But there is something more in the words of this recitative than a simple call to abandon instruments for voice. It is obvious enough—notwithstanding the odd conclusion of Grove and others—that they are a suggestion of the unity of design of the whole Symphony. "No connection," says Grove (*Beethoven and his Symphonies*, p. 354) "need be looked for between the first three movements of the Choral Symphony, and the 'Ode to Joy' which inspired its *finale*. . . . The first three movements might have had another Finale—indeed they nearly had one; and it is not necessary to attempt to reconcile either the opening *Allegro*, the *Scherzo*, or the *Adagio* with the train of thought and feeling suggested by the Ode which is embodied in the latter portion of the work."

How strange! Certainly there are reasons for thinking that Beethoven had contemplated another Finale. It is quite probable indeed that he was *not* satisfied with the existing vocal conclusion; but if he had adopted a purely instrumental conclusion can one doubt that it would have embodied the same general

ideas? If Schiller's words and the whole burden of the last movement as it stands are not an answer and a deliberate climax to the whole of the preceding Symphony, then all the apparatus by which that last movement is introduced, the recitatives by instruments and by voices, the rejection of former subjects, the violent interruptions and renewals, are only so much "rattling of dishes at royal feasts"; they have no meaning except as padding between the instrumental and the choral portions of the Symphony —a conclusion directly contrary to what we know of Beethoven, whose tendency as time went on was, as we have seen in his piano Sonatas, to become more impatient of formalities and always to make his works more and more *continuous* in meaning and expression from end to end.
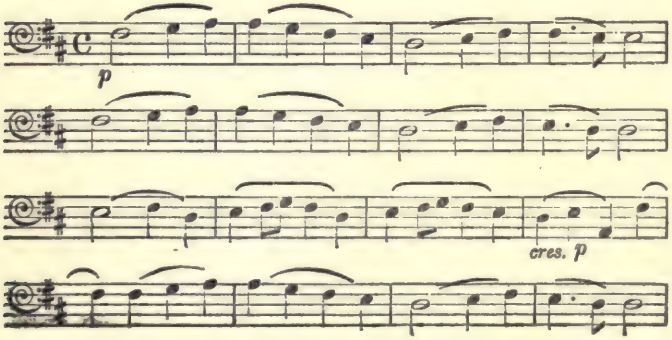
In many respects it may be allowed that the vocal conclusion is not altogether satisfactory. Notwithstanding Wagner's dictum (in his monograph on Beethoven) that it was one of the great triumphs of B.'s genius to treat the voices in this and in the Mass in D as human instruments, and their combination with the ordinary instruments as forming merely "an orchestra of increased capabilities," there is a very general consensus of

feeling that it was just because of this treatment of the voice "as a human instrument" that the result is not quite satisfactory. Somehow it would seem that Beethoven had not quite the *feeling for the human voice;* seldom does he treat it with absolute sympathy. This choral movement is after all not quite sympathetic. There is a strain and a tension throughout, an activity and a restlessness, which are not quite natural to a great body of voices; twelve bars on the high A natural is a tyrannical demand. Brilliant, intense, giantesque, and displaying endless resource, as the variations vocal and instrumental are, in this great concluding movement, one misses the absolute beauty, repose, and unity which are shown for instance in the concluding variations of his last piano Sonata. There is a sense each time that the composer has not quite attained the effect he wanted, and is *trying again.*

But if for a moment one may thus criticise, one must hasten to add that in two respects Beethoven in this Choral Finale has left us a priceless legacy—namely in the melody itself, and in the adoption of Schiller's words, as giving the key to the programme of the whole.

Of the melody, Wagner says (*Beethoven*, p. 46)

"Never has the highest Art produced anything more artistically simple than this refrain, whose childlike innocence breathes on us (when we first catch the theme given in a unison of perfectly even whispers by the bass strings of the orchestra) with holy awe. The refrain now becomes the *Cantus Firmus*, the Chorale of the new Commune; and round it, as round the Church Chorale of Sebastian Bach, the voices harmoniously entering group themselves in counterpoint. Nothing equals the pure depth of feeling with which each new voice as it enters animates this primitive song of perfect innocence; until every adornment, every splendor of growing emotion is united to it and in it, like the breathing universe round a final revelation of purest Love."



This air with its absolute simplicity of structure (the first five notes of the scale in plain diatonic succession), the fruit of long meditation and labor, has that quality which we have already noticed in many of Beethoven's late subjects, especially in that last Arietta of the piano Sonata, Op. 111.[1] It has the sense of perfect rest, of virginal and grateful gladness, conjoined with a sense, partly produced by the arrangement of the harmonies, of infinite experience, and even sorrow, outlived and transmuted. If it has (as it has) that character of *naiveté* and childlike innocence which Wagner attributes to it, it has also the character of *a return* to childlike innocence. The round of all experience has been circled. This is our surrender again to Nature, to simplicity, to the human heart, to Love, to Joy itself; for after all else has been tasted, there is nothing better than these. It is the realisation somehow of a joy (as Dannreuther suggests) which lies beyond the ordinary objects

[1] "Melody (says Wagner) has by Beethoven been freed from the influence of Fashion and changing Taste, and raised to an ever-valid, purely human type. Beethoven's music will be understood to all time, while that of his predecessors will for the most part only remain intelligible to us through the medium of reflection on the history of Art."

of endeavor, which in some way is the fruit of deep suffering, and which certainly had come to Beethoven in these last years despite all the manifold trials and despondencies in which he was plunged. If there had been no words joined to it, still its meaning—to those who have ears to hear—would have been plain enough; for in fact the same message is patent, as I have already pointed out, in a score of his subjects belonging to his last period.

But the words help us of course. While the music gives the *Stimmung*—the deep mood which is thus common to much of his late work—the words give us its special application here. It is curious to find that so early as 1793, when Beethoven was but twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, a friend writes of him[1] "He intends to compose Schiller's *Freude* verse by verse"; and from that time onward in his Sketch-books at intervals occur Schiller's words with musical setting, down to 1822, when the theme takes its present form. For thirty years these words—embodying in a kind of joint human and religious fervor the strongly revolutionary sentiments of 1785 when they were

[1] THAYER, *Leben*, i. 237.

written[1]—had been floating in Beethoven's mind; for thirty years he had tried to find music adequate to their expression. It was not I think by any means an accident that he had to wait so long. He did not find a fitting musical expression for this new world of ideas which occupied the dawn of the nineteenth century, till he had got to the central mood, the root-emotions and *feelings*, from which modern Democracy springs. Nowhere in his works of the first two periods do you meet with this note of absolute simplicity, of freedom, of loving human equality, reached as a long result of experience, that you find here; and while he might have written this Finale of the Choral Symphony any time *after* writing say the piano Sonata Op. 101, I do not think he could have written it much before.

The mood of feeling thus reached and expressed by Beethoven in his last period became to him something like the solution of the enigma of life. And I cannot but think that he has (almost deliberately) expressed this in his Ninth Symphony.[2] The enigma

[1] It is said that Schiller's original title for the Ode was *An die Freiheit*, instead of *An die Freude*.

[2] It is noticeable of Beethoven, as of many another genius, that his art-instinct outran his intellectual development, that is, that he

of Fate, of Destiny, and slight man face to face with it, is presented to us in the first movement; the enigma of Nature, pitiless in her very beauty, appeals to us in the second; in the third we share in the sweetness—and sadness—of twin human love. But all these are ultimately dismissed—even the last by itself is not sufficient—in favor of some feeling, some sense of "compassion and determination," which reaches out to include all mankind; a Gladness so assured that it turns the edge of fate; a sense of Equality and Freedom which gives the soul habitation everywhere.[1]

If this "programme"—to use that expression—had been the result of a mere mental argument, or brain process, I should think little of it. It would not have raised the Ninth Symphony above the level of

expressed ideas and feelings almost before he was *conscious* of having them. He did not, as a rule (like many lesser composers), deliberately frame "programmes," and then set about expressing them in music; but the latter, with all its deep meanings, was the spontaneous expression of new feelings coming to birth within him. It may be said, however, that in his third period the intellectual and conscious and deliberate element in his creations becomes a little more prominent than in his earlier work.

[1] Nor is the *practical* character (if I may use the expression) of this final melody to be overlooked—a firm energetic tone which fits it to be sung by masses of people, and to become a sort of *Chorale* of the New Commune, as Wagner suggests.

Berlioz, or of much of Wagner's work. But if it was, as I venture to think, the embodiment of Beethoven's own experience of life (idealised and dramatised), the pictured evolution of his own heart, that perhaps explains to us the overpowering impression and fascination that this great creation carries with it.

As I have said more than once, it was one of the great peculiarities and powers of Beethoven that he was always trying to express Life—his own life-experience; and notwithstanding his many charming lesser works, I think it may be said that his *greatest* creations are his best. His powers rise with his subject, and he is never so artistically impassioned as when he is expressing the profoundest feelings and ideas, and on the largest scale.

Who indeed ever voiced the great depths and heights of the human heart as he has done: in the profound lamentations of some of his slow movements, the infinite tenderness of others, the Titanic laughter of his Scherzos, the winged gladness of his Finales? Who ever imagined such a sustained expression of endless Nature-joy as in his Sixth Symphony — the sunny country-side, the sky, the clouds, the birds, the country folk, the waters of

the brooks, and the well-spring of joy in the heart pouring forth without end? In that symphony there is a well-known phrase—



—which is repeated, with slight variations, thirty-six times in thirty-six successive bars, yet so large is the scale on which the work is built, so great the perspective, that there is no sense of monotony. The everlasting recurrences indeed throughout this tone-poem give the very sense of Nature's perpetual chime—kisses of sun and wind, and the cradle-song of the ages which the great Mother sings to her children.

In the transition from the Scherzo to the Finale of the Fifth Symphony there is another well-known passage in which nothing happens for fifteen bars but a little chord of A flat and C held by the low strings, with a *ppp* drum going on—
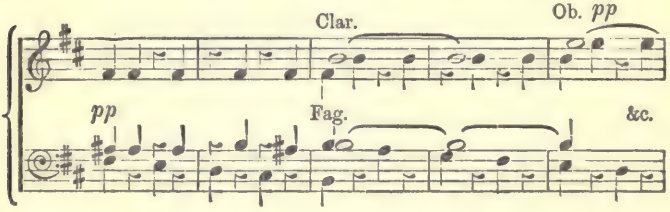


How can that be music? It is mere rest and harmonious stillness. And yet, coming after the mysterious dawn of life in the Scherzo and before the great outburst of the Finale, it has the most

magical effect possible. It is like that tender hush in the songs of the birds, when after warbling from earliest dawn they become silent just before sunrise. And the silence here, as Dr. Hubert Parry has said [1] "is infinitely more impressive than the greatest noise that Meyerbeer and his followers ever succeeded in making." The passage is followed by thirty-five bars of magnificent *crescendo*, in which the drums hold the low C continuously till it changes from being the mediant of the chord in A flat to become the keynote of the triumphant *Allegro*. The *Allegro* itself too, it may be remarked, is worked out on such a scale that the final chord of C lasts for thirty bars. And yet there is no sense of disproportion. The long tenure and repetition of the chord only serve to rivet the sense of assured power and majesty of the conclusion.

No one else created or dreamed of such broad and impressive effects in music before. Only Bach and Händel ever came near such things. Even so early in his career as the Second Symphony (written 1802) we find that extraordinary passage in the Finale, in which the leading refrain fades through six successive keys from F sharp major to G major, the bass going

[1] *Art of Music*, p. 284

steadily downwards through more than twenty successive steps of the changing scales, while at the same time through the wind instruments there floats in a lovely and till now unheard strain—



What an effect! how large, how free! as if the ties of all ordinary existence were broken. "It is" says Grove[1] "as if, after the chord of F sharp, we had passed through a door and were in a new enchanted world. All that we have heard before vanishes. Earth is forgotten and we are in Heaven."

Compare with this dream, this vision of heaven, the awful tragic close of the Choral Symphony's first movement (already alluded to) with its sense of mortal man in despairing conflict with tyrannous fate, the very ground giving way beneath him; or compare with it the passion of grateful adoring love expressed in the *Adagio* of the Fourth Symphony,

[1] *Beethoven and his Symphonies*, p. 39.

or again the exuberant and infinitely droll beauty of the last movement of the same Symphony—



and one realises the depth and range of this man's affections.

Bettina Brentano, writing to Goethe of Beethoven, says:[1] "I am, indeed, only a child, but I am not on that account wrong in saying (what perhaps no one yet perceives and believes) that he far surpasses the measure of other men. Shall we ever attain to him? I doubt it. May he but live till the lofty problem of his spirit be fully solved; let him but reach his highest aim, and he will put into our hands the key to a glorious knowledge which shall bring us a stage nearer to true blessedness. . . . He said himself 'I have no friend, I must live alone; but I know that in my heart God is nearer to me than to others. I approach Him without fear, I have always known Him. Neither am I anxious about my music, which no adverse fate can overtake, and which *will free him who understands it from the misery which afflicts others.*'"

[1] See NOHL'S *Beethoven depicted by his Contemporaries*, chap. xi.

These are wonderful words which are put into Beethoven's mouth. Though their authenticity has been doubted, it is difficult, almost impossible, to suppose that the "child" or anyone else invented them. On the other hand they agree strangely with those authentic words of his already quoted "Every day I come nearer to the object which I can feel though I cannot describe it."

Beethoven is the prophet of the new era which the nineteenth century ushers in for mankind. As things must be *felt* before they can be acted out; so they may be expressed in the indefinite emotional forms of music, before they can be uttered and definitely imaged forth in words or pictorial shapes. Beethoven is the forerunner of Shelley and Whitman[1] among the poets, of J. W. Turner and J. F. Millet among the painters. He is the great poet who holds Nature by the one hand and Man by the other. Within that low-statured, rudely-outlined figure which a century ago walked hatless through the fields near Mödling or sat oblivious in some shabby restaurant at Vienna, dwelt an emotional giant—

[1] The points of resemblance between Beethoven and Whitman in details of the handling of their respective arts would form an interesting study.

a being who—though his outer life by deafness, disease, business-worries, poverty, was shattered as it were into a thousand squalid fragments—in his great heart embraced all mankind, with piercing insight penetrated intellectually through all falsehoods to the truth, and already in his art-work gave outline to the religious, the human, the democratic yearnings, the loves, the comradeship, the daring individualities, and all the heights and depths of feeling of a new dawning era of society. He was in fact, and he gave utterance to, a new type of Man. What that struggle must have been between his inner and outer conditions—of his real self with the lonely and mean surroundings in which it was embodied—we only know through his music. When we listen to it we can understand the world-old tradition that now and then a divine creature from far heavens takes mortal form and suffers in order that it may embrace and redeem mankind.

Bettina Brentano ascribes to Beethoven these words "It is harmony which speaks in my Symphonies, *the fusion of many forms into a compact whole.*" These again are strangely suggestive words, difficult to ascribe to mere invention. When one considers the intense fusion into one

whole which characterises the musical handling of all his later works; when one considers the democratic drift of his philosophic and social speculations, as evidenced by the Third or the Ninth Symphony; it is difficult not to think that he saw (or perhaps one should say *felt*) that as the various movements, motives, melodies, phrases, ay, even separate notes, of a great Symphony, all have their distinct individualities, and yet are parts of one absolute unity —so the universe, so the society of mankind, realises or is on its way to realise, the same harmony, the union of myriads of distinct beings in one Life.[1]

I say *felt*, because Beethoven as a great artist, wrote not at the command of his brain, but of his heart. His instincts, as we have said, probably foreran his logic. As he knit the most diverse emotions and motives together in his symphonies and sat above and beyond them like a god above his own creation, showing their harmonious relation to each other—so he knew (for in his music he had been there) that underneath the diverse and conflicting types of human kind there was an everlasting

[1] The words inscribed to Isis: "I am that which was and is and will be; and my veil no mortal hath ever drawn aside"—were favorite words of his.



and indestructible relation—a Life equally near to them all.

To this Vision Beethoven attained, and to its expression, in the realm of Pure Music. What he had felt in his heart he expressed in the only form in which, at that time and for him, it was expressible. To use to any great extent the forms of Opera or Oratorio would have only been to come too near the squalid actualities of the life of the day, to tie himself in chains of Custom and Convention. It was only in pure Music that he was free—free to express his deepest feeling unqualified by all outer consideration. With him Pure Music, having delivered its highest and final message, ended—or rather, as we have already said, began its inevitable decline. After him, Music has taken and will take its equally inevitable future course, to become the handmaid, with the other arts, towards the realisation of this vision in actual Life.

IX.

The Art of Life

"To thine own self be true . . ."

THROUGHOUT the foregoing papers there has run in a somewhat casual and thread-like way the idea that the evolution of the Fine Arts during the period of civilization is leading up in the present time towards their amalgamation again with actual Life, and towards the reconstruction of Life itself as a thing of beauty and indeed the greatest of the Arts. A discussion therefore of Life as an Art, and of its reconstruction on this new basis ought to follow. But I feel that this subject is too large, and is beyond me, to treat at all adequately. It would lead into the question of the reconstruction of Industry, into the programmes of Socialism and Anarchism, and into a consideration of all the new ideas of diet, dress, household life, the healing art, marriage, and countless other subjects, which are beginning to dawn on this generation, as the myriad

sights of a new world on the awakening eyes of a babe. For a discussion of these things we must turn elsewhere. I can only look upon the present paper and the notes which follow as slight and scattered contributions to a great subject—and beg the reader to do the same.

Life is expression. If you think of it, you will see more and more that it is a movement from within outwards — an unfolding, a development. To obtain a place, a free field, a harmonious expansion, for your activities, your tastes, your feelings, your personality, your Self, in fact, is to Live. To be blocked on all sides, pinned down, maimed, and thrust out of existence, is to Die.[1]

The thing to remember is that primarily Life must be an expression of one's Self. In proportion as it approaches that is it worthy to be called Life. To fall from that is to miss one's aim. To pass through one's mortal days, like a fugitive through the camp of the enemy, in continual fear of discovery, in continual concealment of one's own

[1] It may of course be a question whether the human soul *can* be completely blocked and thrust out of existence, whether in fact what we call Mutilation and Death does not always mean growth and expansion on some other side. However here we are concerned with Life on the side that we know, or know best.

thoughts and feelings, or like a slave under continual compulsion from others, is not to live: it is only to exist.

Yet how many of us pass through like this! On all sides we are walled in by Fashion, Convention, Custom; things are done in an habitual meaningless way which expresses nothing except common tradition, or the remains of it—certainly in a way which does not express *our* feelings. We drift along in idle conformity, simply following the common rut—afraid to show our hands. Or we are enslaved to the bread and butter question and only claim to be ourselves for an hour or two out of the twenty-four. It is not real Life; it is not anything. It is the existence of a sheep, unworthy of the children of that Prometheus who stole fire from heaven, or even of our mother Eve who ate—simply because she desired it—of the fruit of the tree that stood in the midst of the garden.

To resort however, as a remedy, to the gathering of coveted apples, and the mere pursuit of Pleasure, does not bring us much farther on our way. Some would say that the Art of Life consists in so ordering our days that we should get the maximum

enjoyment out of them. It is well. But the maximum of enjoyment is not got by the *pursuit* of Pleasure; but rather by going your own way and letting the pleasure pursue you. Here is a man who lives in a lovely house, so well appointed—everything in good taste, everything apparently arranged so as to yield the most satisfaction in life. What can be better? Yet in the end he is bored to death in it. Somehow—somewhere—there is a deep defect, as in a symphony which might be all gracious, were the instruments not fundamentally out of tune. For one thing he is not really living his own life. For another the wealth which supports this elegant establishment does not come from a harmonious source. By the attentive ear the cry of starving children can be heard through the rustle of silks and clink of glasses. Deep down underneath it all is Discord and Pain; and the nearer the man gets to his real self the more he becomes conscious of this.

He has not arranged well. He has forgotten that nine-tenths of the pleasure of life comes not from Absorption—of liquids into the belly, or sweet sounds into the ear; but from Expression, from the utterance and manifestation of one's real self in life

and work. It is not "that which goeth into the mouth," which is of importance, but "that which cometh out." He has forgotten that pleasure is secondary; that it is the natural accompaniment of life, but not its primary object; that to pursue it is the surest way of killing it.

The primary object of life is Expression. In painting a picture or composing a song there is immense pleasure; but the man during his work is not occupied with thinking how much pleasure he is getting, but whether he is getting the Expression right, and the pleasure comes to him collaterally in every successful stroke. So in Life, if we put the pleasure first we get the Expression wrong; but if we put the Expression first, the pleasure follows infallibly, and without end. [And so too in Love, which is "the master of all the arts."]

Life is Expression. The more we think about it, the more we see that what is satisfactory in it is the output of ourselves, our deepest feelings: of our Love, as in wife and children and harmonious household; of our Strength and Intelligence, as in our work of every kind. To create round oneself an external world which answers to the world within is indeed a great happiness, and the fulness of Life.

The materials which exist for this purpose are—everything. We can select truly what we want, but everything is there for use. Manners, dress, house, occupation, speech, knowledge, skill, sounds, colors, objects, forms, flowers, trees, stars, stones—all these things can be used as symbols, all may and must serve as expressions of ourselves, as part of the language by which we make ourselves known, and fit ourselves to enter the great Fraternity of intelligent beings which constitutes the universe.

We are approaching a great culmination in the history of the human race. We are approaching a period when mankind will rise to something like a true understanding of Life, and to a subjugation of Materials to the need of Expression. Hitherto this has been impossible. Hitherto the scramble for existence has so dominated society, that the mass of men have been forced to forego any effective expression of themselves. They have been slaves to materials, content to scrape them together as best they could for the satisfaction of one or two elementary needs — like hunger. But with the present era mankind must rise above materials to

the conception of *making use of them all indifferently*—the only purpose for which they exist. The coming Age with its marvellous development of mechanical powers must free the human race at last from its long bondage to earth, and give Wings to Man, so to speak, by which he may rise into something like his true life.

Materials, I say, must be used for Expression. This is only the law of all Nature. Things (so-called) are but unapprehended Thoughts. Matter is Mind in an opaque state. As far as we understand and see into a thing we credit it with life and animation; as far as we fail to do so we call it brute material. A piece of rock seems to us inanimate; a flower already smiles; to look into the human eye is to see intelligence clad as with a crystal garment. Yet take the rock and examine its intimate structure with a microscope and it breaks into flowers and crystals, lovely and expressive, without end. A child learning to read sees blind black scratches and dots on a white background, and wonders at the stupid senseless things; but the grown man sees neither scratches nor dots. *He does not see the letters at all.* They have become transparent, and he sees *through them* to the things which they

indicate. So when we have learnt to read material things—the symbols of the Soul-life—we shall see through them to the things which they indicate.

I say the scramble for existence has so far dominated society in the past, that the mass of men have worked, not to *create*, not to create round themselves a world answering to the world within; but simply in a negative way, to avoid penury, to avoid starvation, to satisfy one or two beggarly needs, to please their *masters*. But such work expresses nothing—nothing but what is beggarly. The time is coming when man will rise into command of materials. He will not work from Fear but from Love—not from slavish compulsion but from a real live interest in the creation of his hands. Then, at last, and after all these centuries, his Work, his very Life, will become an Art—it will be an expression of himself; it will be a word of welcome to someone else. Everything that a man creates, be it only the simplest object for the use of himself or his neighbor, the installation of his house or garden, or the speciality which he supplies to the community, will be touched by the spirit of beauty. It will be the free product of his own nature, of his own activity—the expression of that harmony within

which alone makes true work possible. It will have the same beauty that every leaf, every flower of the field, every bird's nest in the angle of a bough has—the beauty of joy and of freedom in the great comradeship of Nature. While men labor as they do to-day—without hope, without interest, without love, without expression, in sordidness and weariness and squalor of mind and of body, the ban of Ugliness inevitably rests on everything that is produced. In this December sea of ugliness that surrounds and engulfs all modern life, the Fine Arts, so-called, like so many cranky, summer-rigged yachts, toss aimlessly about, with no certain destination or purpose, but in a heroic endeavor at least to keep afloat! The art of Expression, which is the very art of Life's Navigation, has been lost. Our daily lives have lost all directness, all authenticity; we are full of lies and conformity; we do not express ourselves in our social life, when we walk, when we speak, when we work at our trade; how then shall we suddenly learn to do so when we retire into our studios and lock the door!

When people seize life rightly they will make their daily work expressive. They will see that this, the great joy of expression, must penetrate all life—

and since our daily work is three-fourths of life it must penetrate that. Manual work, once become spontaneous and voluntary, instead of servile—as it is to-day—will inevitably become artistic. There is no other possibility, and the world will be full of beautiful things which will mirror to us the thoughts and hearts of those that made them—of our fellows.

The Art of Life is to know that Life *is* Art, that it is Expression. It is to rise above the Body, to rise above Materials; to use them for expression, but to know ourselves different from them. As the painter uses his colors, and keeps a store of them by him, but is not such a fool as to mistake them for the object of his labor: so we have to use life, objects, materials, even the body itself. Nothing need be refused, but things must be *used*, they must not be truckled to, they must not be obeyed or worshipped. Mastery is the great word of the Art of life. There are other words, like Candor, Courage, Perseverance; but Mastery includes them.

And here comes in the practical value of ideas like Simplification and the Return to Nature which in the mouths of the John Baptists and Rousseaus of

various periods have so often heralded great revolutions. They represent the preparation for Mastery, and for a more extended expression of the human Spirit. Since, as we have said, the ground is so littered with convention and otiose lumber of all kinds, it is necessary from time to time—both for society and for the individual—to *clear the ground*, to reduce, simplify, brush the underwood away; in order that there may be more space for expression, and the less amount of useless material to overcome. It is a necessary process.

And it is the Law of Economy in all Art. In a poem you want no word, no syllable, which is superfluous, which is not part of the expression, and of one piece with the rest. Alter a single word in a good poem and you have spoilt it. Beethoven's method of composition was one of ruthless excision. So if one's life is to be expressive, one does not want lumber in it, it must not be full of things that mean nothing, or that mean the wrong thing. Excision is still the word. One does not want to wear other folks' clothes, to be called by their names, to adopt all their formulas of life. It is true they are always trying to thrust these things upon one, and furiously raging and taking offence

if one does not submit; but one has to be stern and determined, and to amputate—even with a show of bravado—the wooden limbs which one has been compelled to wear since childhood.

It is still Mastery: to keep rising out of attachment to any one thing, and to make all things into symbols, emblems, means of converse, of *union with others* (for what else is expression?). The painter must not be a slave to his pigment, or to a certain color-effect; for that is to become a mannerist, and gradually to lose expressiveness. The Musician must not let a certain motive override all proportion in his symphony. Nor must Man be enslaved by a motive—lest he become a monomaniac. He must use *all* his motives—to express him*self*.

I know this is a hard saying: express *all* yourself. It leads one right off into the impossible—into Death, Love, Eternity—all the things which lie behind life. Express all yourself? But we do not know all the elements of our own natures, and if we did—good heavens, what a menagerie! Certainly Society around would not allow us to uncage all those beasts! And yet we *have* to declare ourselves in some shape, and show ourselves to our friends, to our enemies, to the world. To do so is in fact Life;

and we cannot be satisfied till we have fulfilled its definition.

Society certainly gives no scope. Division and subdivision of labor develop just one side of each of us; the germs of all our other faculties lie smothered. Mrs. Grundy allows us to express some things, other things and thoughts must for ever lie dumb. But this is all impossible. How can we paint a picture with three colors of the rainbow, leaving out the other four? How can we declare ourselves when we are like figures on a canvas with but a profile shown—who never even turn our eyes frankly on each other?

But then alas! it is true not only that Society makes our expression onesided, but that we *are* onesided from the beginning. One passion of our souls is monstrously developed, another is dwarfed; and those passions and emotions and thoughts that have their utterance are at war and scolding at each other; we are full of sin and strife and chaos, and where amidst it all is that harmonious bright-eyed being—that self—that soul of which we have been dreaming, who seeks like the imprisoned Dryad among the tangled branches to make her plaining heard?

Ah! surely a great art it is, and the greatest of arts, to liberate that captive—to subdue the wilderness (of our lives) till like the rose it blossoms, or like a gracious forest breathes a Presence that has made its glades a home. For Adam called the wild four-footed things around him—each the image of some human passion—and gave them all their place and name; and Orpheus by the magic of his lute drew the heart of every creature to his own; and all down the ages has come that legend of Psyche hated of her elder sisters, of Cinderella among the ashes, of the Sleeping Beauty in the thicket, of Daphne lost in the laurel-tangles—that dream of the fair One whom the Lord of heaven loves.

To express oneself, to bring all the elements of one's nature into harmony—all of them—and then to get them uttered in one's Life: to build them out into the actual world, into a means of union with others: how glorious that were! Pheidias on a marble form of Zeus might toil for five years, but this were worthy of more than a lifetime—to give outline to something imperishable.

The key to the expression of one's true self is boldness. William Blake said the true artist should

always err in the direction of *excess*. Boldness and loving Acceptance. For goodness' sake let these so-called evil motives have their expression. They are only evil because they have not yet found their place, their balance. Find then their place for them. You may always express yourself strongly in one direction, provided you do justice also to the opposing expression. You may get as angry as you like on occasion if habitually you are self-controlled. You may even be allowed to indulge the sympathetic vein at times if you will be frankly egotistic at others. In fact only in this way can expression be worked out. Violent words from an habitually violent man mean nothing; the sympathy of a weakly altruistic person is without shape. High lights demand deep shadows. The flesh demands the spirit, the spirit the flesh. Space can only be expressed by the bounding line; the line is nothing but the edge of a space. Extirpation, rejection, denial are useless. Bold statement of seeming opposites and the slow patient loving disclosure of the harmony underlying: this in the long run is the only method. It is here, in the soul's joyful intuition of the unity and consent of all things that our perception of Beauty arises.

What a great Artist he is who extends the area


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of expression in daily life, who redeems something else into the great Harmony—who teaches us how to put a new color on things, or to give them a new form or attitude! in the drawing-room, or the street, or on the platform, to give what has been banished, its sane and simple utterance; or what we secretly admire, its frank performance; who finds us a word, a gesture, a manner of life, which supplies the expression we have so long needed, and delivers to light and air one more little petal of our souls. How well worthy of our ambition are triumphs in this great field—which appeals so closely to every human being!

In this field of Art—the art of Life—the greatest triumphs, be assured, await Mankind; and await us all, as individuals. The instant you absolve yourself from the tyranny of motives and materials, and use all these things for what they are, you command all. Success is assured; whatever you need you can have. You rise out of pain, and leave it behind. You pass into that region where you take part in building up your own body, in building up the events of life, from within, from the unseen side. You stand, like the greatest of musical composers, outside your own Creation. And this alone is Life—all else is dreams and confusion.

That instinct of loving Union which lies at the root of every human Soul awaits its expression in humanity at large. Even now this is not so far off. To your own Self be true and it will follow "as the night the day" you will be in touch with all other Selves: you will have the Angel-wings which will carry you in an instant from one end of heaven to the other.

NOTES
ON THE ART OF LIFE

I.

Manners as a Fine Art

WHAT a fine art indeed Manners is—so fine that the point of it escapes most people! It is much to be feared that the British have no gift in this direction. Even in their most cultured circles there is a certain want of perception, a certain constipation and *mauvaise honte;* and almost everywhere you find restlessness, anxiety to do the right thing, apologies for *not* having done it, or tiresome chatterboxings, or curiosity, or a show of cleverness: egoistic wrigglings of all kinds, very much opposed to the calm unselfconscious equality and real dignity of the best manhood and womanhood. The British have splendid qualities —truth, tenacity, slow-accumulating feeling—but they have not the gift or the grace of expression. Perhaps however it is hardly fair to *expect* dignity of manner from people who are occupied in that unworthy scramble for the gold and glitter of outside life which characterises the Western lands; or expressiveness from a "society" that dresses as ours does—the men looking like blackbeetles in their horny monotony of garb, and the women obviously preoccupied in scoring points of elegance over each other.

The Orientals achieve a greater success in this line. They

show more both of charm and dignity, and a truer instinct for dress. And among them the Japanese (if one can call them Orientals) stand pre-eminent. This marvellous people seems to have the gift that we lack. They have understood to its core the Law of Economy in Art. In their whole handling of life; in their ultra-simple house-construction, furniture, dress, in their pictorial Art, in their Manners, they have known how to produce results with the least possible expenditure of material; they have shown the lightest, most skilful, touch on Life.

That it is "so difficult to dress with distinction" is the bitter cry of the Western "lady" to-day. And certainly when the fashions are changing four times a year, and every Jemima in Paradise Alley takes in her fashion journal, one realises what a struggle it all is, and how deserving of sympathy these wealthy sufferers are! It is indeed a fact that any woman who wants to hold her own in the fashionable world has almost all her time consumed either in social functions or in arranging about her costumes for them. Under the circumstances one can hardly expect her to wear the said costumes with pleasure to herself or her friends.

Not that the defects of the democratic scramble, and defects of manners generally, may not be found among the masses of the modern peoples: but in their case—where there is generally some real hard daily work to be done—one plainly sees how the needs of actual life and the world *plane* off excrescences. The workman may be narrow and vain, as anyone else, but the necessities of his labor soon call him to order: he gets, through his work, a sense of

proportion between himself and the world, which lies very much at the root of manners; whereas your "gentleman," having nothing particular to do, is quite satisfied to stretch himself in your chair and deliver himself of endless platitudes—and is only astonished at *your* rudeness (not perceiving his own) when you go about your business and do not listen to him.

Certainly work, solid useful work, is a great rectifier of human conduct, manners, and everything else. Fitting into the great sphere of our fellows in that way we cannot go so very far wrong, and I sometimes think that everything—bluntness, eccentricities, brutalities, crimes and all—have to be forgiven to those whose lives are in the main usefully occupied. Thoreau says that there is nothing like manual labor for taking the vain twists and kinks out of one's tongue and wrists. "Learn to split wood at least. Steady labor with the hands, which engrosses the attention also, is unquestionably the best method of removing palaver and sentimentality out of one's style both of speaking and writing." And rare as is the charm of really good manners it is most often I think to be found—sometimes quite in perfection — amongst manual workers: a real and free exchange of human interest, the art that ceases to be art and becomes nature.

That concealment or forgetfulness of itself in which, it is said, Art largely consists, is also a necessary element of good Manners. One of the great points seems to be a kind of unconsciousness. It is bad manners doubtless, to insist on going first through a doorway, but it is almost as bad to be always insistent on the other person going

first. If you can persuade your companion to pass through absolutely without knowing or thinking who precedes you have effected a triumph. If you can attend to your guests' wants at a meal without making them aware that you are noticing what they eat, that is good; but beyond this you are on dangerous ground, for to be a little neglected is pleasanter than to feel that one is being inexorably watched. But most people who study civility are so afraid of being *thought* impolite, that they will make their friends feel uncomfortable rather than run this risk. They are really thinking of themselves more than of their friends. Anyhow, the dust of life is bad enough, and the art of Manners should consist in laying rather than in raising it.

In this respect the teaching of Manners and rules of Manners to children has to be carried out with caution, and should always be referred to foundation principles of natural courtesy and consideration for others, rather than to conventional regulations—which only breed a selfish timidity in the young mind.

What a wonderful thing it is to meet a man or woman whose manners are instantly open and free—not effusive of course, but opening up a direct road (as far as the occasion needs) between him or her and yourself! How grateful you feel for being delivered for once from the shin-breaking barriers and thorny entanglements of ordinary intercourse!

It is true there are some people who seem rather to enjoy these entanglements; who treat manners in the height of ceremoniousness, as a matter of elaborate study, and something like a game of chess. To make a move of gracious

courtesy and politeness—but which is capped in a few moments by a similar move on the other side; then again to effect a subtle stroke, which you think can hardly be eclipsed, saying inaudibly, "check"—only to be replied to by a compliment almost impossible to parry—all this is amusing of course; but it can hardly be dignified with the name of good Manners. It is only a good game—for idle people to play at.

It is not good Manners because it is not true. Manners rest on the two fundamentals of human intercourse—Truth and Sympathy. You must learn to say (or act) what you yourself mean, and you must learn to understand and consider the other person's needs. The whole of Manners rests on these two things. The second condition gives an enormous range and variety—making it impossible to fix any *rule* for what may be best under diverse circumstances. If you want to gain the confidence of a plough-boy you must learn to lean over a gate with him for five minutes without ever a word passing between you. This might not be the pink of breeding in a drawing-room. Most townspeople could not do such a thing to save their lives: but if you do it you will have effected an understanding better than words with the rustic, and he will be your friend ever after. All people have their needs, belonging to their class, trade, race, and their individual needs as well—which if you understand you can infallibly tame and domesticate them—as the ox-tamer knows he can tame the ox when he sees it.

But there is something more—something even more necessary perhaps than sympathy with others—you must be true to yourself. To-day Manners are meagre and poor

because everyone hastens to conceal himself—no one expresses forthright his own feelings, his own nature and needs. It is an elaborate system of lying, of skulking, of dodging behind conventions. How often do you give a bit of your real self to your neighbors? and what are those mouldy scraps—picked up on the common road and stored in your wallet—which you have the face to offer them instead? And they, poor things, are hungering for a touch of Nature too—but you deny it them!

It is generally allowed that many animals, savages, and rude uncultured people have more dignity and grandeur of behavior than the ordinary civilisee. Somehow, because consciousness in such types does not return on itself, they act out their own quality unhindered and become touched with the majesty of that Nature of which they form a part. I was once at some large clerical meeting or other, in a private house. Vicars and curates, deans and canons, swarmed. How Christianly sympathetic we all were—so deferent with subdued voices and meekly conjoined fingertips; but where O where was the genuine human animal, where the authentic divinity? Then, casually, a large S. Bernard mastiff, one of the family, strolled into the room. Immediately he became the centre of attention. How glad everyone was of his presence—what a relief! He allowed himself to be caressed and complimented, as by right—for he certainly had the most dignified manners of anyone present (including the bishop)—and then quietly stretched himself on the floor and went to sleep!

To speak, to act, to live out yourself is very hard, very difficult—especially when (as is quite necessary in the case

of human beings) it has to be done with a full effort to understand and consider the needs of others. There is no royal road—of birth or convention—to this; but a sincere facing of the facts of life is about the only guide.

I have heard people say—as in a kind of awe at the magic of birth and breeding: "Ah! but you can always tell a gentleman when you see him, or a lady when you see her." But there is no magic in the matter. For any trade always knows its own. A cutler knows a cutler, and a coalminer a coalminer—however far they may be from their work; if you have once been on the road yourself you will always be able to recognise a tramp: and a person whose profession has consisted in dining out will know instantly from a trick of speech or the handling of a table-napkin whether the other person belongs to the same profession or not. Each trade has its earmarks which to those who know them are infallible.

It is not perhaps generally recognised how instantaneous this kind of detection is, and how vain in consequence the so common attempt to conceal oneself. Think of anything that you *thoroughly* know—your own trade for instance; and then think how quickly, if any fresh person appears, you can tell—as by a kind of instinct—how much *he* knows about the subject. If you are a good musician you know, the moment the girl touches the piano—almost before she has played a couple of bars—what her musical capacity is, and which Polonaises of Chopin (if any) she might attempt to play. A man appears before you and talks about his carpentering skill. If you do not know the trade he may impose upon you, but if you are a joiner yourself it is quite

sufficient to see him take up a rabbeting-plane or a plow and look at it, and you do not require to ask him any questions, or to run the risk of his telling you any lies!

So, going about the world, though we may impose on a good number of people undoubtedly, yet inevitably in each department of our character we meet with someone who on that subject reads us like an open book. The young man has never told the special secrets of his heart to anybody—yet before long he meets with a man, or more probably a woman, who being skilled in such affairs knows at once exactly what is ailing him. The parson has a little credit for being a man of superlatively orthodox views, yet someone in the congregation there is sure to be, who notes all the little unconscious innuendos of heresy and interprets their meaning where they fall blameless on other ears. They say that, in prison, warders get to know quite well by the mere look of a convict whether he is meditating escape or not.

This being so, and the expression of oneself being a necessity of one's being and in some form or other quite inevitable, it seems much the wisest, most dignified and sensible thing to do, to deliberately achieve that expression for oneself—to bring oneself, alive and gracious, into the world, instead of waiting to be disembowelled! To work out one's own character, to give it full and perfect play and expression is one of the greatest of the arts—and Manners is one of the means of this deliverance.

II.

The Simplification of Life

(Reprinted from *The Savoy*, of July, 1896.)

THE editor asks me to say "a few words" about "Simplification"—a subject which seems somehow to have got itself connected with my name, though I should think it only a comparatively-speaking small part of my programme. I remember, in that highly moral tale *Sandford and Merton*, that there is an affecting account of a certain Miss Simmons who, after some frivolous charmer has executed the usual fireworks on the piano, sits down and plays "a few simple chords" which "bring tears to all eyes." I suppose our editor expects me to produce a similarly touching effect on the readers of the *Savoy*.

But I really have no sentimentalities to give utterance to on this subject, nor any moral tale to unfold. People (of the kind that carry reticules) sometimes coming into my study and finding it a moderately bright room with a few objects in it worth looking at, take it upon themselves to say, "But I thought it was against your *principles* to have ornaments"; and then I have to explain, for the hundredth time, that I have never said anything of the kind, that I have never

set up duty as against beauty, and that, anyhow, I have not the smallest intention of boxing my life, or that of others, within the four corners of any cut-and-dried principle.

It is a question of facts, and of the art of life. And the facts are these. People as a rule, being extremely muddle-headed about life, are under a fixed impression that the more they can acquire and accumulate in any department, the "better off" they will be, and the better times they will have. Consequently when they walk down the street and see nice things in the shop windows, instead of leaving them there, if they have any money in their pockets, they buy them and put them on their backs or into their mouths, or in their rooms and round their walls; and then, after a time, finding the result not very satisfactory, they think they have not bought the *right* things, and so go out again and buy some more. And they go on doing this in a blind habitual way till at last their bodies and lives are as muddled up as their brains are, and they can hardly move about or enjoy themselves for the very multitude of their possessions, and impediments, and duties, and responsibilities, and diseases connected with them.

The origin of this absurd conduct is of course easy to see. It is what the scientific men call an "atavism." In the case of most of us, our ancestors, a few generations back, were no doubt actually in want (and if one goes far enough this is true of everybody)—in want of sufficient food or sufficient clothing. Consequently it became a fixed "principle" in those days, when you saw a chance, to accumulate as much as you could; which principle at last became a blind habit. Savages when they come across a good square meal—in the

shape of a dead elephant—just stuff as much as ever they can, knowing it doubtful when they will get another chance. In decent society nowadays the fixed idea of stuffing has been got over to some extent, but the other fixed ideas mostly remain; and, without knowing exactly why, people cram their houses, their rooms, their shelves, with "goods," their backs with clothes, their fingers with rings, and so forth, to the last point that can be borne.

Of course if the good folk really enjoy doing so, it's all right. But, from the wails and groans one constantly hears, this seems to be an open question. The gratification of fixed ideas, unlike the gratification of a living need, seems to be a kind of mechanical thing, supposed to be necessary, but certainly burdensome, and bringing little enjoyment with it. And progress seems frequently to consist in just getting rid of such ideas as best one can, by surgical operation or otherwise.

There are different ways of dealing with this question of Accumulation, which so harasses modern life. The first may be called the method of Thoreau. Thoreau had an ornament on his shelf, but finding it wanted dusting every day, and having to do the dusting himself, he ultimately came to the conclusion that it wasn't worth the trouble, and threw the ornament out of the window. That was perfectly sensible. There was no question exactly of sentiment or of principle, but just a question of fact—was the pleasure worth the trouble?

Personally I like to have a few things of beauty about me; and as it happens that I dust and clean out my room myself, I know exactly how much trouble each thing in it is,

and whether the trouble is compensated by the pleasure. It is merely a personal question. Some people might like their rooms crowded up with objects, and still be willing to spend a good part of their lives in keeping them in order; but no one surely could quarrel with them on that account.

That is all easy enough to see. But now there is another class of folk who, experiencing the pleasure of having certain possessions, are not willing to undergo the labor of keeping them in order. They want the pleasure without the trouble or pains attaching to it, That is, they want to make water run up-hill. They therefore buy servants and attendants to keep the things in order for them. And they do this because they think the method will be a "simplification" in their sense, *i.e.*, that it will save them trouble. But in general they think this only because they are muddle-headed and do not think clearly.

The problem is not escaped; for most people, being partly human, cannot have other folk living under the same roof without feeling bound to and even concerned about them, to consider them and their needs, their interests, their troubles, sicknesses, and so forth. Thus, after a time, they find that instead of reducing complications they have only added a fresh responsibility to their lives. Having got a housemaid to look after your rooms for you, you find that she has to be instructed constantly in her work, that even so she does things wrong, breaks the china, and quarrels with the other servants; that she has an invalid mother at home, and a young man in a neighboring public house, and no end of griefs and grievances, fads and fancies, of her own; so that now, instead of dusting and cleaning your own rooms, the

only difference is that you have to dust and clean the *housemaid* every day, which turns out to be a much more complicated and serious job.

If on the other hand, as is the case with some people, you are really a little less than human, and are in the habit of treating your servants and attendants as a kind of cattle, and can consent to live in a house with them on such terms —you are still no better off by this method. For naturally they revenge themselves on you at every point. In one of those suburban villas whose endless rows run out like rays of sweetness and light from the centre of the civilized world, I heard the other day a charming duet between husband and wife. It was founded on the old subject. "Brutes!" at last exclaimed the husband. "They do all they can to annoy you. Now there's that cook, she's *always singing*—always singing at her work. And I'm certain she does it because she knows I don't like it!" Well, of course you are lucky if you come in for nothing worse than singing—though that, no doubt, is trying enough when out of tune. But it is exhausting work anyhow, trying to make water run up-hill, and at the best it is work that's never finished.

All this however does not prove that servants are necessarily a mistake. Because you get rid of one *idée fixe* it does not follow that you must enslave yourself to its opposite. If you were sufficiently attached to your attendants it might turn out that the pleasure their presence gave you compensated for the trouble they caused. And it might happen that you were really doing more useful and congenial work in dusting your housemaid's mind than in dusting your

room. In this case there would be a sensible and natural exchange of services, with a gain to both parties; and the relation would actually be a "simplification." These things are so very obvious that I feel quite ashamed to put them down; but it is not my fault that I am called upon to do so.

Life is an art, and a very fine art. One of its first necessities is that you should not have *more* material in it—more chairs and tables, servants, houses, lands, bank-shares, friends, acquaintances, and so forth, than you can really handle. It is no good pretending that you are obliged to have them. You must cut that nonsense short. It is so evidently better to give your carriage and horses away to someone who can really make use of them than to turn yourself into a dummy for the purpose of "exercising" them every day. It is so much better to be rude to needless acquaintances than to feign you like them, and so muddle up both their lives and yours with a fraud.

In a well-painted picture there isn't a grain of paint which is mere material. All is expression. And yet life is a greater art than painting pictures. Modern civilized folk are like people sitting helplessly in the midst of heaps of paint-cans and brushes—and ever accumulating more; but when they are going to produce anything lovely or worth looking at in their own lives, Heaven only knows.

In this sense Simplification is the first letter of the alphabet of the Art of Life. But it is only that; it is no more than the first letter. And as there are so many other letters to learn, I trust that we may now pass on; and that we may be spared further queries on the subject from our friends, with reticules or without.

III.

The Return to Nature

(Reprinted from the *Humanitarian*, September, 1896.)

THE phrase, Return to Nature, much in vogue during the close of last century, has again at the end of the present one come curiously into fashion, and has become the subject of a good deal of discussion, of attacks, rejoinders, and so forth. It must be admitted that the expression has the appearance of being a vague one, and possibly a mere cover for formless sentiment; but it is possible also that there is in it a good deal more than that, and it may be worth while to consider with a little care what the underlying meaning may be.

When, in walking over a mountain country, you miss the path or find it running out into mere sheep-trails, you generally *go back* till you reach the main track from which you strayed, and then go forward again. That seems the instinctive thing to do. And there is a good deal to show that there is a similar tendency or law in human progress. While ordinary reforms and changes consist in a hastening

(more or less rapidly) along the existing line of progress, there seems to be a certain other class of reforms or "revolutions" which are a going back to a previous point, and a branching out from thence. A little thought indeed would show that these are the only two possible methods of growth; and that forward leaps, skipping over intermediate ground, or sudden departures from *new* points, could hardly be expected in the development either of individuals or of society; since evolution is not discontinuous, and the human mind and human habit and custom demand some kind of consistency in their movement.

May it not indeed be said that *all* growth takes place on some such principle as that indicated? Take the case of a young tree. A leading shoot is formed and grows rapidly. Then it hardens and becomes woody. The sap is checked, cannot find outlet in the direct line of growth, so returns and forms a bud farther back and branches out from this earlier point. If it were not for this action trees would be like walking sticks—or flagstaffs.

In society, institutions after growing for some time become hard and ossified; then we are practically forced to seek back to earlier forms, and begin to work out our salvation by starting from these. We ask how our forefathers solved the problem; we go back to root-needs, or root-principles; we take up the thread of history at a past point. And when this occurs on a large scale (as for instance in the French Revolution), it carries with it the idea of going back to *Nature*, and is characterised in this way by friends or foes. [See also in the French Revolution and at other reforming periods of European history the return to

Classicism, and to the supposed example of the Greeks and Romans.]

And this use of the word Nature is not inapt. For as society evolves and becomes more and more complex, that part of man's surroundings which is due to his own conscious design and arrangement continually increases in comparison with that part which he does not create, at any rate *consciously*. Historically speaking, or in the order of evolution, the conscious part comes latest; the other is more primitive. It is easy to call the one part artificial (*e.g.* city life and surroundings), and the other part by contrast natural (as life in the woods); and this without professing at the moment to draw an absolute line, and without implying in any way that the one epithet conveys a superior merit to the other; but simply as a convenient distinction.

In this sense one institution (say modern Banking) may be called highly artificial, as being a very conscious and purposive arrangement; and another (like mere Barter), may be called natural, as being a quite spontaneous and unconscious custom, occurring at an earlier stage of human growth.

Some superior people have urged that it is absurd to talk of natural and artificial in this way, since all man's works are in a sense products of Nature, and no real line can be drawn. But it is obvious that criticism of this kind can be applied to almost all general terms, and to give way to it would practically bring the use of language to an end. That the line between artificial and natural is not a very fixed one may easily be granted; but the rational thing

to do is not to discard the words but to give them as much definition as they are susceptible of.

If then we find that in many respects modern life has come to an *impasse* and a point of arrest, it may be contended (from what has been said) that a large analogy of all growth would lead us to expect a return to an earlier and more primitive stage in social development, as to a point from which to branch out afresh; and would lead us to consider such a Return to Nature as perfectly logical and in the order of evolution.

In effect, to anyone who looks, this reversionary process is actually showing itself in an immense variety of ways—in social life and institutions, in individual needs, in art, thought, religion, &c. Our social institutions are branching out again largely from the communal root-principle; there are strong movements in individual ideals towards more simplicity of living, and even to a kind of savagery in dress, diet, open-air life, &c.; the flow towards the cities from the country, which has taken place during all this century, is now being met by a distinct counter-current "back to the land"; while the tendencies to paganism in morals and religion, to nature-methods in art, to orientalism in philosophy, though too complex to be traced here, are all obviously enough of the same character. At the same time these movements are no mere reversions, but point pretty distinctly to fresh developments from the earlier ideals which they imply.

There is, however, a Return to Nature in another kindred sense which ought not to be overlooked—namely in the growth of the Individual as well as in the progress of

Society. For as societies grow by the branching process, so also do individuals.

One feels, say, that one's life is expanding pretty rapidly along a certain line. This goes on for some time; then comes a check. One calls it a disappointment. Circumstances arise which do not allow of further progress; or the material already collected becomes too unwieldy to be further shaped; hardening of the woody fibre sets in; the animating sap can find no outlet. Then follows a period of inaction, of depression, of doubt, and a sense of failure; and one may think that the game is over. But it is not so. After a time one inevitably feels back within oneself for another point of departure farther down. New plans and a new growth arise, dating from another part of one's own Nature and needs; one returns to the deeper planes to make a fresh start. And one may say that it is a good thing on the whole that these checks occur. They make one's life richer—more full of branches, and less like a walking-stick!

The Return to Nature when it occurs in this sense is a return to the more primitive, indispensable, and universal part of oneself. All checks, disappointments, &c., occurring as they do along the surface, mean, perhaps, that; and mean ultimately a new branching out. Death surely means it.

Is it not a true instinct therefore, of so many individuals in a time like the present, when they find their actual lives nipped and cankered on the surface by the conditions in which they live, to hark back not only to simpler and more "natural" external surroundings, but also to those more

primitive and universal needs of their own hearts, from which they feel a new departure may be made? They go back to the ever-virgin soil within themselves.

And, perhaps, the deeper down they go, the nearer (to follow the simile of the tree) do they get to the universal life and that which lives in all the branches.

THE END

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